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THE
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O F
L I F E
Set forth sufficiently and compleatly in the
HOLY SCRIPTURES.

— *Truth shall retire
Bestruck with fland'rous Darts ; and Works of Faith
Rarely be found.* —

MILTON, Book XII. 535.

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THE P R E F A C E.

THE Knowledge of the Truth is, confessedly, a Matter of the utmost Moment. And yet, when we come to look into the Proceedings and Writings of Men, there is nothing so hard to be attain'd. The Reason is, Men have ever been zealous for the Establishment of their own Doctrines and Opinions, instead of being inquisitive after the Divine Will. Hence it is, that after all their Endeavours, that Truth is in so great a Measure hid from them. This is evident, not only from the Imperfection found in the Works of ancient Writers, but likewise from such as in Opposition to Reveal'd Religion, have so much cried up and exalted the Law of Nature. For even at this Day, after all the Advantages they have had from reveal'd Religion, and other Improvements owing to it, it does not appear, that these Men are able to give us a perfect Rule, or one to which there are not many Objections. And, indeed, the Designs of Providence being such as are only known to God himself, it is impossible Men should give a Rule agreeable to them, till he has been pleased to declare to them what those Designs are: This gives Preference to re-

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vealed Religion above natural, say the best Things of the latter you can, and that too for Reasons which cannot be denied, nor want additional Strength.

The Reader may, perhaps, be surprized to find so large a Defence of Christianity without any Use made of Antiquity. In Answer to which, I say, as far as I have been able to discover, the Rule of Life, as now exhibited to us in the canonical Books of the New Testament, was understood in the primitive Times as I here understand it: But it continued not long in this Condition, as is naturally to be expected.

Of the Usages of the Church in the Ages immediately succeeding to that of the Apostles, the Fathers are Witnesses: For which, and their opposing the Heresies sprung up, their Works are certainly valuable. But the Question is not how Men have understood and used the Rule, but whether the Rule itself as now exhibited to us be the Truth or no. During the three first Centuries the Doctrine seems to have been pure, except what gave Occasion to the Council of Nice: After which, you have endless Contention and Struggle about Orthodoxy, consisting chiefly in right Notions of what was deliver'd in Scripture concerning the metaphysical Nature of the Son and Spirit: The next Things are the Nestorian, Eutychian and other Heresies, or impertinent Doctrines of Men, either about Things of no Moment, or such as they had no Business with, nor could be Judges of: By and by it is fixt for a certain Rule, that the Catholic Church could not err, and the Roman Church was the Center of Unity: This made way for the Establishment of the Papacy, and that being done upon fundamental Errors, and forc'd for its Support to impose others, and to have them carried in Councils by secret Management and Corruption, the Consequence is plain.

In the mean time, let us see what Use Men made of the Rule itself. And here it is Mankind may be said

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to have fallen a second Time — from a rational^l Faith, to a most absurd Credulity: From considering the whole Scheme of Christianity under the immediate Conduct of Providence, and what should therefore be compleated, to fancy the Church, or a certain Society of Men, arrogating and engrossing themselves that Title, should be miraculously supported: From having a Rule given in itself true and infallible; to pretend they must be so assisted as not to mistake in their own Judgments or Determinations about it: From a Call to pursue the Relations and Duties in Life with the utmost Strictness, to supersede and set aside those Relations, and to embrace the monastic Life; or from forsaking the World, consider'd as a Scene of ambitious, covetous and sensual Men, to neglect the reasonable Part in it: From Chastity, to Abstinence from Marriage itself: from a Power to preach the Gospel in Spite of all Opposition, to put the civil Government under them: From considering that the Method of our Redemption is wholly of God; to suppose Men had not moral Abilities: From paying a proper Regard to such as had born witness to the Truth, to the Invocation and Worship of Saints: From preparing their Minds to undergo even Martyrdom, should it be necessary, to count it needlessly; with many other Things of the like or worse Nature. These Things determined me to seek for the Knowledge of the true Nature of the Rule, in the Rule itself; especially as the Evidence to be found there is appealed to by the Author and insisted on by his Apostles. They who would see how Men have conducted since the Rule was given, must consult Church History, the Determinations of Councils, and the Decrees and Decretals of Popes till the Reformation, and since then the Progress of the Truth in its several Periods. But they who would find the Truth itself, must examine the Rule, every Part of which having a wise good End, must of course be found rational and consequently command their Assent.

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The Law of Nature is demonstrable, no Precept appearing there but what is recommended from its Use. And in like Manner, there is no Precept in Christianity which is not recommended from its Tendency to beget in Men that Improvement in Virtue, which at the same Time it consults the present Life, is necessary to produce a better, wherein that Virtue shall be rewarded; so that the same is true of Christianity. This, therefore, is that Truth which must prevail: For it is back'd by the divine Power, and the World is conducted by divine Providence, as is demonstrable. And the true Idea of the Christian Faith is to believe in God, and that all Things were made, and are supported and governed by him—and particularly, that he hath made Choice of that Scheme which is exhibited to us in the Old and New Testament, 1. In the Creation, and 2. In the Redemption of the Species, or in order to bring them thereunto. And this Doctrine being peculiarly agreeable to the Nature of the Species, considered either in a fallen or weak State, or as—who could not of themselves attain thereunto, though that is necessary—this is a clear Demonstration of the Truth and Certainty of that Faith.

In the Second Place— As to the Administration or Conveyance of that Rule, we may observe— there is a natural Order to be kept, upon which all the Distinctions in human Society are founded, and have their Ends and Designs necessary to the procuring it. And therefore, to bring Things to an Agreement therewith, is to set them upon their true Foundation, and to teach Men to act so as Nature points out, and demands; in which Case the Good of the whole must be effectually secured and advanced. Now this is the very Business and Design of the true Religion; for which Reason our Contention for it, understood as it should be, is the most rational Thing in

in the World, as it is contending for that which gain'd that Good, is secured and vice versa. In order to which, three Things are necessary, 1. That our Rule be such in it self: 2. That we understand that Rule as it is in it self: 3. That the Administration of it be such as shall make it answer: Or that we understand the Power or Commission given in this Case aright. Indeed to think Power given a Property a Man may call his own, is very common, but at the same Time, an Instance of the greatest Weakness, and a plain Proof the Species are fallen from that natural Order. For whatever may be said of civil Rights, which are all to be settled according to Reason, or so as is consistent with, and productive of, the Peace and Happiness of the whole Society, it is not possible that Power should be a private Property, the Nature and Design of it being in itself no other than the Exercise and Performance of that Part, upon which the Good of the whole depends. A Right to succeed to the Administration of Power a Man may have by civil Appointment, Law, or Custom; but he cannot have a Right to Power it self, because no Agreement, no Ties, no Oaths, nothing in Nature can confer such a Right, or alienate from others a Right to Existence, and the Privileges of it, except their own Behaviour become inconsistent with the Good of the whole: In which Case that Right is forfeited. In any other Case, it is impossible it should be taken from them without Outrage or Blindness: Nor can they give that away, or part from it, without which the very End of their Being is absolutely destroyed. Princes, as well as others, are obliged to receive the Faith, and in Consequence to think thus of Power. And as it would be absurd to pretend to argue for an arbitrary Power from that Rule, whose Business it is to bring Things to Reason, or to the State and Condition intended by the Creator; so to say that either St. Peter or his Master

designed to set up any other Power than that of preaching the Gospel, by which Things should be brought to that State, is absurd too. For as the Reason of the Thing shows, in the first Case, what is to be done, without Need of any particular Directions, save what our Saviour has given, viz. that Princes should not exercise Dominion over their Subjects, but make use of the Power committed to them for the Good of the Publick only—or consider it as a Thing wholly and solely to be used for the Protection of the Rights and Liberties of the Community; so here, there was no Need of particular Instructions about Authority, farther than what are given. And of which the chief is, that such Authority should be applied to the effectual Administration and Conveyance of the Word only, that so all Men might be fully and faithfully taught it, and receive the Benefit of it.

That Power or Government should be thus understood and exercised, is plain from the very End and Design of it. And to suppose a Power, or an Authority, set up distinct from this, is to suppose a Constitution establish'd, and yet another Power superinduc'd; which being foreign or not appearing to have a wise End, as all Things to be received by us must have, it cannot be true. And what is more, granting that Christ gave such a Power to his Apostles, and they to others; yet it is plain, should those others deviate from that Rule, it would then be necessary to set that Power aside; otherwise it would frustrate the End proposed, being made use of for another. And, therefore, there can be no other Power than such as was given to Christ, and which derives its Essence and Sanction from the End proposed by it, or which is authorized by God for the Sake of that End.

It is manifest, then, that the Power given to Christ, and by him to his Apostles, is essentially connected with, and cannot be considered separate from, but must be

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be measur'd by the Purity of the Doctrine taught by them; and where that is not, there is no Power. For God authorizes what tends to promote the Happiness of his Creatures, and nothing else; so that if you would prove your religious Establishment to be true, you must shew us the Doctrine in its Purity, and that your Establishment is such, as will answer the Design of that Doctrine. And three Things result directly from this Method of defending the Authority of either Civil or Ecclesiastical Government; the 1. That Authority set up for the Use of the whole, and necessary, cannot be denied: 2. It is not liable to be suspected, as it has no other View than the right One: 3. Every wise Man seeing the Strength of this Foundation must chuse it. When Things do not answer their End, Men must defend them upon other Grounds, Tradition, Custom, and Power granted; and they must contend for the Validity of such Tradition, Custom, and Power, this being the only Way in which they can hope to gain their Point. But where they do answer their End, there will be no Occasion for pretended Claims or assur'd Authority. This is the Case of the Civil Magistrate; his Power is uncontestable so long as it is kept within its proper Bounds, and in its right Sphere, and needs no other Proof of its Validity than its Use. And in like Manner, Power or Authority in the Church, and all Decisions regarding Discipline and Order, are what no Man can reject, where the one is exercised within its own Sphere, and the other are aimed at their right End. And thus far Arguments urged for the Institution and Sanction of Church-Government must necessarily be allowed. And it is no Matter under what Names or Titles that Government be administred, provided it be rightly so.

Upon this Foundation, viz. the Doctrine of Christ in its Purity, we build; measuring the Doctrine by its End, and the Government, or Administration of the Word

Word by its Efficacy and Aptness to procure that End: And rejecting all other Things as impertinent. And since a Society was instituted under such OEconomy as is suitable to, and productive of the Things intended, we acknowledge all Powers and Claims belonging to it as such, and must submit to them, provided there are no Offences, no Stumbling-Blocks in the Way. And tho' so many Stumbling-Blocks have been thrown in our Way—— yet are we desirous to pay all Regard to the Powers and Claims of the Society, which the Case will in Reason, joined with the utmost Charity, admit of: And farther than this it is not possible to go.

Thus it is manifest the Christian Doctrine must be true, as it fits the Case and Circumstances of Mankind in the most perfect Manner. And the English Constitution both in Church and State must be true, so far as it is consonant to that Doctrine, but no farther. Which Doctrine, we say, is the original Law of Nature, which Men through Ignorance and Passion had forsook; and to restore which, God interposed, adding what in the present Circumstances is necessary to bring about his Designs, and to compleat them at the last. Both which being received into the Communities of Men, must render them as happy as they are intended to be, provided they conform to them. Nay, farther, it is evident, here is a certain Ground whereon to build the Religion and Government, the Reputation, Prosperity and Glory of every particular Nation; the reverse of those deep Politicks which are generally employed herein: Here is a certain Ground whereon to build the Dignity, Prosperity and Glory of particular Families, agreeable to Nature and the Calls of Society: And here is a certain Ground whereon to build the Interest, Reputation, and Glory of every particular Person, agreeable to Nature and to the same Calls. And all Religion, Power, Interest, Honour, Prosperity,

Prosperity, and Glory, built hereon is right, and consequently must have its Weight. And this is that reasonable State of Things, which so many poor Protestants have suffered in the Flames for—— while others, fancying every Approach to it threatned Diminution and Ruin to their Power and Greatness, persecuted them; not seeing the sole Way to put an End to such Disorder, was to change their own Manner of thinking, and to permit Men to enjoy the Benefit of that Rule, which being rightly understood and agreed in, must answer every wise End whatever, without taking from them any one Thing that in Reason they could desire.

If you look back to what is past— Here you find the Popes presiding over the Chburch indeed, but yet having their worldly Ends in View, forc'd to admit that for Orthodoxy, which is the Corruption of it; and there you find the Princes mov'd and sway'd by the like Motives. All which Scenes of Popes, Princes, Caliphs, though far from what they should have aim'd to have made them, were permitted, that so Men might be left to their own free Choice. And yet human Nature is capable of great Improvements; nay, what is more, in the End, all shall fare according to the Use they made of the Opportunity afforded them, when by the secret Workings of Providence this great Scene shall close in real Orthodoxy. For which Time, as we are to use our best Endeavours to bring it about, so is the whole Community of Christians to pray without ceasing, or ever wholly laying aside that Petition.

In a word: As endless and inconceivable Evils have been occasioned purely through the Want of the Ground mentioned; and without it, let Men project what they please, they never can attain a solid Establishment of their Interest, Power or Greatness, as they desire: As the endeavouring to force Things not right in themselves, hath brought Disgrace, Vexation and Torment

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upon the Authors: And as Men have been tempted to dissemble the Truth, to prevaricate and act that Part, which is of all Things upon Earth the most pernicious, merely because they could not reconcile their present Interest and the Truth together: So to make known that Ground in such Manner, that Men may build upon it, and challenge the Approbation of others, from the Reasonableness of what they hold, is the Way to remove those Evils. And again, as the doing so, must give such Confirmation to the Happiness they enjoy, and the Honours they wear, nothing can exceed it, except that true Glory to which it tends and approaches, (that is, when the Motives of Men's Actions and their Characters being discern'd, and their Virtue confess'd, others shall be carried towards them with the strongest Affection, particularly to those who in Contempt of the Things in Life, have been instrumental in promoting the Good of the whole System; and the whole System being raised and put together shall be witness of their past Behaviour, their present real Excellence and most happy Case) so to prove, that Christianity proposes this, the most rational and excellent Thing in the World, and that it neither is, nor could be, proposed elsewhere, is the Design of this Book. And what I wish is, that it may be examined, and if true received: That so such as shall please may see, there is a certain Road of thinking cut out for us by God himself, adapted to the Circumstances of human Life, and equal to every wise End that could possibly and must necessarily be proposed by it; and the only Reason it cannot prevail more is, the Want of Consent in that right Understanding and virtuous Disposition it demands, as the sole Method of recommending it to such as have not yet received, or been taught it.



THE INTRODUCTION.

AVING evinc'd beyond all Possibility of Doubt, or reasonable Contradiction, that there is a Rule of Life, which neither was, nor could be taught by any Man, or Body of Men whatever, it seems necessary to show, that that Rule is not only contain'd and set forth in the Holy Scriptures, but in what Manner it is so, and may be demonstrated to be so. For this I must refer to the following Discourse, join'd to what was said before. From which it will appear, that the Christian Doctrine is such as is not to be deny'd or evaded, tho' neither Miracle nor Prophecy is called in to its Support; nay, that it is such, as to evince the Reality and Certainty of the Miracles and Prophecies themselves.

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What I would observe farther, is, that Divinity in this Method is capable of being compleated. That Morality is capable of Demonstration, a great Genius taught long ago. Since then the Law of Nature hath been so well delineated, we cannot want Satisfaction in any thing material there; and Christianity, rightly apprehended, coincides so entirely with our Idea of the divine Goodness, with the Principles planted in human Nature, and the Happiness resulting from the Observance of that Law, nothing can be more convincing.

In the next place, how pleasing must it be, amidst the Noise and Emptiness of Life, to have a Rule whereon to rest with Security, and to see that however disagreeable things may now appear, yet they are continually drawing nearer to a right State, or to the Period of our Wishes! That we have a Rule before us, to which if we apply aright, we must of necessity derive from it all the Knowledge we can want, either in regard of our present or future Existence! That we don't believe this implicitly, but can make it appear!

In the third place, What better Ground can your Establishment or Constitution either in Church or State be fix'd upon, than that which, after the strictest Examination, shall be found agreeable to the Truth, or to that great End which it is evident the Creator

must have in View in the Permission and Government of such Creatures as Men are, at the same time it succours the present State, and renders the Law of our Nature perfect? Besides, if the Rule is perfect, and we have a clear and distinct Idea of it, we shall reap this farther Advantage: We shall not be subject to the Commotions occasion'd by Enthusiasts, nor to the Designs of Hypocrites, or other Mistakes. Or if these things cannot be entirely avoided, yet the Establishment will stand firm, the sensible and judicious Part of the Community being perfectly fix'd and secur'd thereby.

For these and other Reasons, I have endeavour'd to give a true Notion of the Nature of the Christian Revelation, in order to shew the Affinity and necessary Connection betwixt it and the Law of Nature; that as the last is capable of Demonstration, so that Affinity and Connection being prov'd, it might appear the other is so too. All this is done; and if I am not mightily deceiv'd, the Plan is just, and the Arguments irresistible. And yet after all, the greatest Difficulty still remains. For the Search of Truth is not only attended with Labour, and requires a Mind perfectly free from, and rais'd above Prejudices; but when you have brought yourself to this Pitch, what more have you gain'd, than perhaps to appear singular, and to be rejected with Scorn? Were Men fond

of Truth only, Things wou'd wear a Face quite different from that they yet wear. But, alas, every Country has its great Men, which it beholds with Admiration, and follows with no small Degree of Enthusiasm, be they Men of good Understanding or no, or be their secret Views and Designs what they will! While this is stern and rigid, pretends to examine into your Establishment, has somewhat against you, and of course is always unpopular, generally unbefriended, and the Reverse of the common Taste.

What is still worse; It is not only the Reverse of prevailing Customs, but requires Attention and some Sagacity to be discern'd; and tho' it marks out most other things as what are empty, and doom'd to perish, yet is it seldom seen itself; nay, it vouches what seems impossible; it questions what is deem'd, and hath been long deem'd right; it admits not, nor can be persuaded to allow a Merit to some things, which have received a Sancti- on from the general Applause they have met with: but sifting the Causes of that Applause, and attending to the Views of the Authors, and the Consequences of their Works, rejects and contemns them. Secure in this triumphant and majestick Thought, that every thing must in the End give way to it; but yet labouring under this Inconveni- ence, that it must wait the Time appointed.

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Besides, Men in general have already formed their Notions, and naturally approve what is agreeable to those Notions, but must look with Indignation at that which pretending to correct or improve them thereby offers an Affront. So that according to common Observation Things of this Nature should be insinuated, Prejudices evaded, and the Sentiments drest so as to slide into the Hearts of Men insensibly. They should be conveyed with such Dexterity, that they might seem to draw them from themselves ; as when a Man is pleased with the Discovery of the fine Strokes in a Picture, as being not only agreeable to, but a Proof of the Justness of his own Taste. Whereas this admits of no Artifice at all ; but must appear naked and rough, some of the particular Virtues of Christianity being inculcated for that Purpose.

But notwithstanding these Difficulties, and a thousand Things as untoward ; as Christianity hath been called in question, and it is of the utmost Importance Men have a right Idea of it ; and as many have maintained Notions of it, as though it were not a Thing rational in itself, but above Reason, and have defended it in a Method agreeable to such Notions, it was my humble Opinion this Conduct could not be right, and that it should be defended from its apparent Usefulness only, or from its being that Rule of Life, which,

all Things considered, squares so perfectly with the Circumstances of human Nature, it must be ridiculous to reject it. And I was the more confirmed in this, because, though it is plain the ancient Philosophers have given such excellent Precepts, yet the Advocates for Christianity seemed unwilling to allow that, for fear (I suppose) of lessening the Respect due to Christianity : Nay, this seemed to make it necessary we should search into the Nature of our Rule, and be able to evince its Superiority from Fact. And as this manifestly called for some new Method, wherein the Comparison between the two Rules might be made, and Justice done to both ; so what I have done either as to the Choice of the Method, or Execution of the Design, is the best I could do, and I shall make no other Apology.

But before we go farther, it is necessary to mention here what is Matter of Debate, I find, with many pious Persons, and that is, as Episcopacy hath been a Bait, a Snare to the Ambition of Men, whether or no it ought not, for that Reason, to be rejected. It is plain, to put an End to the Mischiefs occasioned by Ambition, our Saviour condemn'd it by his Doctrine and Example. And accordingly every Person otherwise qualified to bear that Office should be of such Temper as utterly to deny Power and Honour consider'd as such only. For to seek such Things

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for their own Sake, and not for the End to be promoted by them, is contrary to the Design, and truly Antichristian. For which Reason *Nolo episcopari* has been required as an essential Ingredient in the Character of such Persons, and is strictly reasonable. The Rule itself without it had been imperfect, no Method being propos'd whereby the greatest Evils might be prevented, and the End obtained. On the contrary, let Men act according to that Doctrine and Example, and nothing can be wanting either in the Church or any other Society; which those dignify'd Gentlemen who are so great Enemies to this Order should consider. For no Reason can be urged against this Dignity, tho' Ecclesiastical, which will not hold against their own, though Civil. It is the Use of the Thing that must support it. And Christianity is not an adventitious arbitrary Doctrine, but essential to all Societies, and demands to be received, and must be received by them e'er they can be what they should be. To be absolutely such indeed, or to arrive at Perfection herein is the grand Crisis to which God in his Providence is bringing all Nations upon Earth, and therefore is not to be expected till the Consummation. But they ought all to be converted to it, and to be render'd as conformable as possible. To return to the Point in Hand.

The Design of Christianity is to prevent the Mischiefs occasioned by Ambition ; and therefore every Thing in a Christian Society should correspond therewith. And whatever tends to cherish it, or to prevent this Design, should be removed and banished, that so the People may be able to see and learn what they are to do, and how to distinguish what is or is not right according to that Design. Above all, the Clergy ought to be Examples herein: for this, after a fixt Resolution to shun all manner of Vice, is the next Thing necessary and essential to the right effectual professing that Doctrine which Christ taught. All this is confess'd and allow'd. But now as in civil Society it is required Power be attended with some sort of outward Solemnyty, Dignity with Figure, and there be proper Supports for such, so it is here. And the Question is how we may avoid the Abuse of them, or prevent Men loving the Power or Dignity instead of the End, the sole Thing a reasonable Creature should be bent upon, and the Thing so much insisted on and inculcated by that Doctrine. And here the Method taken by some, I find, is to destroy the Power and Dignity itself; and they think themselves justified in it, that our Lord hath commanded us to call no Man Master upon Earth. *But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth,*

earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called master, for one is your master, even Christ, Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

Now in Answer to this we say, no Man is obliged to submit to any Thing that is wrong or seems to be so, but according to our Saviour's Example to bear witness against it. In this Sense you shall call no Man Master; you shall have no regard to the Affertions or Authorities of Men; you shall freely exercise your own private Judgment; your Right to do so is a fundamental Part of this Rule; and you must not suffer it to be violated or superseeded upon any Account whatever: Not though you are sure to make all Men your Enemies thereby; not though you are sure to be ruined and undone by it. Rouze up your Courage and shew yourself a Man. Mind no Order, no Institution, no Establishment, nor abate one ace upon this necessary Point. But when you have done this, you must remember there is a Power to be exercised, a Dignity to be allowed and supported: Both which directed to their right End, and entrusted to proper Persons, will answer that twofold Design of Christianity, 1. to prevent the Mischiefs occasioned by irregular Ambition, and 2. to furnish us with such Men, as shall effectually secure to every Society its intended Happiness, this being the End of all Power and Distinction whatever. To take away that Authority and Dignity is,

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in Effect, to destroy Society: For no Society can subsist without them. And, therefore, our Saviour never abated any Thing of this Sort, notwithstanding his great Humility and Condescension; as is manifest from these Words ——— *So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? ye call me Master, and Lord: And ye say well, for so I am,* John xiii. 12, 13. ——— What remains therefore is, that you distinguish in this Manner and then insist so far as is in your Power, that the Authority to which you submit, and the Dignity you own yourself obliged to acknowledge, be such as is intended: such as is right and will answer its End.

In the next Place, we grant, such Authority and Dignity are a Snare to weak Minds, and that it is here human Nature generally fails us. You say, Dock the Authority, and diminish the Dignity, for there is no other Way to prevent that Mischief; but this is what we deny and disapprove. Authority, so far as it is cramp't, is no Authority; and Dignity, that shall be trampled upon of those it should lead, or awe into good Behaviour, is no Dignity. As therefore, such Authority and Distinction are necessary, it is necessary the one be capable of reaching to all Cases requiring it, or have its full Force; and the other, such as may answer its End to Society.

ty. And this cannot be accomplished in any other Way, than teaching what is expected from such Persons, inculcating the Virtues, and preparing them for the Practice of them by a proper Education; so that the whole Stress will now lie upon a proper Education, and that Men be acquainted with that two-fold Design, be instructed so as to distinguish betwixt irregular and laudable Ambition, understand the Nature and End of all Power and Distinction, and be so principled as to attend to that End, and to measure their Happiness by the Degree in which that End is promoted by them, and to think other Things of no Moment; nay, injurious and pernicious without it. Which being supposed, 'tis plain such Power and Distinction must be just and regular. Private Judgment is allowed, nay Men are called upon to use it; and yet, after all, they are obliged to submit to that Authority, and to acquiesce in that Distinction, not as Things arbitrarily imposed upon them; but as the Reason of the Thing itself, and the common Good of the Society demands, they should submit to and acquiesce in them.

This, as I take it, is the general Sense of this Nation upon this Head. For which Reason, though they are watchful against, and impatient of all Power beyond what is reasonable, and may answer its End, yet are they cautious not to disable it, or render it

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incapable of answering that End. And what is true in regard of the civil Magistrate, is true in regard of ecclesiastical. Every Thing necessary to the attaining that End is allow'd and approved: and though Corruption and Weakness there will be, nor can it be prevented, yet this is what gives the Constitution in Church and State the Character it claims, that is, that it is such as to answer the Ends of Government, and to make Men happy in their several Stations; and is not built upon a false Basis, nor obliged to cherish Error and pernicious Doctrines, nor to suppress the Truth, nor to guard against Innovation, that is, against Light and Liberty, nay against the natural and unalienable Rights of the People, for fear of Alteration.

The Constitution then so far must be right. But do Men act agreeably, or is there less Ambition, less Emulation in worldly Things, less Aversion to the most momentous Truths, than in other Nations? Are Men more publick-spirited, more desirous of the Success and Propagation of the Gospel here than elsewhere? Is the Thing proposed by that Gospel their Aim, or are there other Things in View?

In Answer to this we say, that there are Numbers with whom the first is the Case, and in Praise of whom it is not possible to say enough, should one be so vain as to attempt it. But of the common Run, the best

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we can say is, that we plead guilty. A good Constitution we don't want, nor to know what the Nature of such a one is, or wherein it consists; but Practice we do. Good God! that so excellent a Rule should lie before Men, and they should frequently offer up their Prayers for its Success, without using the Means within their Power! that a Religion should be establish'd in the Name of Christ, and yet the Design of that Religion should be so little regarded or even understood! It is true, Men are not yet raised up to that Height of Knowledge and exalted Generosity, which should make them vie in Instances of true Wisdom and Goodness only: They have not learnt to be of such Temper as to seek Occasions of improving the Virtue, and, in consequence, the Happiness of those around them; and as far as possible of all Mankind: They are not studious of and bent upon the Ways and Means of doing so, nor desirous of the Capacity for the Work-sake: They have not yet learnt not to mind high Things, and to descend to Men of low Estate, according to the true Meaning of those Words, as they ought to do: And this is an unspeakable Mischief to their Fellow-Creatures, as it treads down all Virtue and real Merit, and makes them Things of no Moment in Life; and as it deprives Thousands and Millions of that Regard and Tenderness to which they have

have a Right by Nature, be their Circumstances what they will. But as certainly as the World now is in the Condition you see, this must be the Case. And why then should you fret at what shall have so fine a Cure! Why torment yourself with that Pride, Inconsideration and Blindness, which infinite Wisdom hath thought fit to permit for so grand a Purpose! Is there any Evil in Life, for which God hath not provided an effectual Remedy! Is any Thing projected by him mean or low! And if one Part of the Species shall thus ascend, will it not draw the other after it, however born in Times less enlightened, or under other disadvantageous Circumstances! Will not the Time come when true Knowledge shall increase and beget in Men such a Longing to see the Things propos'd, accomplished, as shall give them an entire Hatred and Aversion to whatever obstructs it! Is not the Good intended by it sufficient for this! And should Men then see their best Friends or nearest Relations so perverse as to endeavour to prevent it, must not that necessarily turn their Hearts against them, and make them contrive by all possible Means to bring them over! View the Species as it now is, and

Here you find Millions labouring under the most grievous Hardships, the poor ignorant Slaves of those wicked Men who treat

treat them unmercifully and cruelly, and to their shame be it spoken, know no better.

Here are Millions again lying under all the Disadvantages of either no Education, or of one that is worse than none. Their Minds are entirely perverted, their Customs gross, and sometimes barbarous and horrid.

Here again are Millions drawn into an Imposture, and suffering the sad Effects of arbitrary and lawless Power. Their Understandings are cramp't, and their Souls debas'd by the miserable Usage they meet with.

Here are Millions again trick'd and deluded by such as should have taught them the right Way, and glorying in the Shackles of Bigotry and Error.

Here are Millions again, where the Truth is much boasted of, and yet the real Knowledge is in little or no Esteem ; nay, where they are generally the greatest Strangers to it, upon whose Example, Influence and Encouragement, its Success seems to depend.

Others are engaged in the Pursuits of the World, elated or dejected as Fortune smiles or frowns, but unable to mount up to and set before them what is truly praise-worthy.

And others, unmindful of the Dignity of their rational Nature, and insensible of the Necessity of enquiring after the Divine Will, spend their Days in a stupid Drudgery, pleas'd if they can attain a few Necessaries, and may partake, upon Occasion, in such

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Gratifications as could not be relish'd but by Minds degraded beneath themselves: Add here the Vices of the greatest Part of Mankind, which in reality are not only great but monstrous. View the Species, I say, all the World over, and this you will find their Case. And this is what God permits, not for any Thing that at present can be said in Praise of such a System of Creatures; but because that System, of which this is for the most part the true Idea, shall open its Understanding, and taking in that Rule, produce the Fruits of it; namely, that Virtue, that moral Perfection, that Love of our Fellow-Creatures, that Regard to the Honour of the Author, and the Relations in Life it was intended to produce. 'Tis thus the Gospel shall at last be diffus'd, and like many other Things, have an amazing Run among Men; only with this Difference indeed, that it shall never fail, never more undergo the least Adulteration.

As strange and absurd Doctrines have been deduced from Scripture misunderstood, so the fine Plans that have been raised thence by wise and good Men, in order to recommend it, have sufficiently struck at the Vices and Enormities in Life in general; and this certainly is one main Thing. But what I have oft thought just Matter of Complaint is, that they seem to rest here, when it is plain there is not only a moral, but likewise a political Design

Design there: not to set up new Sorts of Government, but to bring all Government and Distinction to such a State and Condition as to make them answer their End, and to bind all Persons to attend to that End as they should do; to render all Things what they were originally designed to be, and must be, e'er they can produce that Order and Happiness, for the Sake of which they were made; to teach Men to abstract themselves not only from the Corruption, but from the present Model of the World, and to see Things in another Light; a Light communicated by the Divine Spirit himself; that is, in plain *English*, to lay aside all other Emulation, and to strive to abound (as I said before) in Instances of true Wisdom and Goodness only; to abhor the Pride and Vanity, the Luxury and Grandeur of the World, and the World itself, consider'd as a Scene of ambitious, covetous and sensual Men, and model'd according to the Notions of such Men; and to learn to find out and feel the Wants and Miseries occasioned by them, and to be impatient for their Redrefs; to be intent upon raising Men into that Character, by which they must of course become Objects of the greatest Esteem; to beget in themselves this Disposition, and to use all possible Means that others do so too. This, after the Destruction of Vice and Wickedness, is the Design of Christianity, and what compleats

the Idea of it. And I have insisted the more upon it, because the Conversion and Reformation of Mankind in general so manifestly depends upon the Principles imbib'd, the Example set, and the Influence us'd by such Persons ; I mean Men of Fortune and Figure in the World, or of Place and Preferment either in Church or State. And all I shall add upon this Head, is, that till they are got into this Road, the Advantages they enjoy are nothing, however they may be transported with them, and have Multitudes for their Admirers. 2. That it must be an ill Sign, when Men quarrel with or neglect a Rule whose End is to raise them up to Glory, by first bringing them down to what must be the Foundation of it, good Sense and good Nature. And, 3. That taking human Life in this View, diversify'd as it is with so many Characters, such a Variety of Circumstances and Events, and superintended for so good an End, nothing can be more beautiful, except the Evils occasion'd by such Men ; which Evils will, in the last Result, be found no Evils to any but the Authors of them ; and even to these, the Way to escape is easy ; and when they are in that Way, the Consequence is Satisfaction and Joy in their present State, arising from the Consideration of that which is to come, without abridging them of any one reasonable Gratification.

To gain this End, it is necessary that Rule be recommended in such manner, if possible, as not to be resisted; and in order to this, that we be determined about the Nature of our Rule, instead of that Variety of Opinions which so much weaken the Cause, and seem to keep us at a full Stand. Of which what clearer Instance can you have, than the different Judgments of Men about the Inspiration of Scripture? It is plain, in the Holy Scriptures are contained Things immediately inspired by God, which it is our Business to search out; and which, if us'd aright by us, will answer their Design. But we cannot, without great Care, pretend to say where such Inspiration was given, and where not. Whence this grand Inconvenience hath happen'd, *viz.* that the Adversaries finding Men unprepared here, have objected to such Things contained in the Rule, as could not in their Way of understanding them be defended. And then others finding Objections brought, but no Satisfaction given where it might justly be expected and demanded, have rejected the Rule. Whereas raise what Contests you please about the Old and New Testament; let there appear real Forgery, as every Thing, so far as it depends upon human Conduct, must be own'd subject to it, yet this must signify nothing, if what I have said be right, that is, if there is a perfect Rule there; and the Reason we

value it is, that the Creation and Permission of this World, admitting that true, may be reconcil'd to the Divine Goodness ; but upon no other Supposition can be so. Which Position gives such Strength to the Christian Cause, it is surprizing this Method was not insisted on before, and that an implicit Faith was not only thought necessary in Popish Countries, but somewhat of that Sort, even amongst the Reformed ; it having been urg'd as a certain Truth, that there is a Merit in Believing, abstracted from its End ; and that God requires an entire Resignation of our Reason to Him, with other Things of the like erroneous and pernicious Nature ; when it should have been said, We believe, because we have the utmost Reason to do so, and cannot possibly avoid it. By which Means, instead of complaining of Infidelity, and imputing it wholly to the Wickedness and Prophaneness of the Age, but evading the Point we should lay Stress on, or giving a Reason of the Hope that is in us, or a satisfactory Answer, we should approach the Enemy's Camp, and dare them to the Combat. In a word, the Design of the Creation is, that Men be happy, and every Thing that coincides with that is right ; and whatever is introduc'd into Society deviating therefrom, or calculated for Men in their Contentions with each other, in any other Way than promoting, that is, whether you call it Religion,

Law, Government, or Civil Distinction, an injurious weak Thing : And the true Definition of Faith is this, *viz.* That we believe Things will be so conducted as to answer that Design to such as shall deserve it, together with all Things necessary and essential to the Scheme and Nature of that Conduct.

Thus the Truth itself would not be irresistible only, but our Defence of it too. And as the Character into which Men are to be raised hereby is most excellent, and an Instance of the finest Taste, it must be a most fatal Blow, a most ruinous Reproach, an irreversible Downfal to the Pretences of those Wits who are valued for having discovered an Imposture here, and exposing a Thing so deserving, as they weakly imagin'd, to the Scorn of Men. Which Character, as you search, and your Scope is, Conviction only rises naturally out of the Materials us'd, refines your Taste, as well as confirms your Belief ; at the same Time you are presented with a Rule compleat in itself, adapted to the Scheme of the Divine Providence all along, and that may be defended upon the Foot of Reason only. So that though the Force of the Argument from Miracles may be evaded through the Mismanagement of Men who have substituted false ones, after the true were ceas'd, and thereby given a Handle to that Pretence, yet the Truth of this Dispensation cannot be so ; because, if

you only appeal to the Texts prefix'd to these Discourses, and to the Things suggested by, and deduc'd from them ; this is as clear as any one self-evident Proposition. And farther,

If there is a compleat Rule here, it must follow, that there can be no Inspiration. I mean, such as was necessary to compleat that Rule ; and therefore all Pretences to any Thing of that sort must be Weakness. How God, who superintends all Events, will spread the everlasting Gospel, is not for us to know. We can demonstrate, that in his own Time he will certainly do so ; but must wait till that Time arrive, and the Things of the World are in Readiness. In the mean Time, we can prove, that the Gospel is what no Man in his right Senses can reject, and with God nothing can be more easy than to give Success to it.

When I speak of the Excellence of the Establishment, I expect others make the same Allowance I do ; that is, having found there is a general Consonance there to the Thing propos'd, and nothing grossly or even unquestionably erroneous, this I reckon a sufficient and undeniable Recommendation of that Establishment to me. Notwithstanding which, when I praise it, this is not to be understood, as being exclusive of Improvement, or as if all Things there were such as not to be capable of being better'd ; neither are they commended any farther than as they were

were approved by Men who designed and judg'd well, but disclaimed all Pretence to Infallibility; who judg'd freely themselves, and expected others should do so too; and whose Judgments may be set aside as Reason shall appear, and the Good to be done by it shall point it out. Which Allowance is ever necessarily to be made, because we cannot pretend to Perfection; and yet wherever this Allowance is made, and Things are drawing towards that Perfection, and in the Way already, this, we say, is the next Thing to it, and the utmost that can be expected. It is true, indeed, an establish'd Religion is the Voice of Nature; but then it must be consider'd, 1. That it is difficult to establish one that shall have no Flaws in it. 2. That where-ever such Flaws are found, every Man, as bound to promote the Cause of Truth for the common Good of Mankind, is bound likewise to bear witness against such Flaws. And if you call to mind what Sort of Religion Mankind have all along set up and established, you will soon own how far they have ever been from establishing the true one. For Christianity being what puts an End to other Religions, shows they were all wrong; the Reformation shews Christianity itself as model'd by Men, was quite perverted; Differences among the Reformed show there is still Want of Amendment in most Places; and the Nature of Things tells us, that great Improve-

ments may yet be made, even in the best Religion now subsisting in the World. In short, the greatest Difficulties in our Way are Attachment to Establishments and Parties; all which are yet to be broke through and surmounted, e'er Mankind can attain the Truth strictly so called; and that is the best Religion which approaches nearest to it now, and which prepares Men with Resolution and Bravery, as well as proper Principles, to break through and surmount them. Where Things are repugnant to, and evasive of the Design of Christianity, as in most Countries, there every Man that has his Eyes open is obliged, at his utmost Peril, to bear witness against them; and where there is the greatest Consonance, and nothing seemingly erroneous, yet it is every Man's Duty, even there, to sift well, and to endeavour, by all manner of Ways consistent with the Good of the Community, to bring Things nearer to their intended Perfection. And where there is this Consonance in the Establishment, and this Spirit, this Disposition is found in the Members of that Community, I doubt not to say, there is the true Church of Christ; not in its Perfection indeed, which is the End of all, but in its Progress to it.

But whatever may be said of Establishments, which are the Works of Men only, it is manifest the World stood in need of a compleat Rule of Life. And this, I say, is contained

contained in the Holy Scriptures, and is not to be found elsewhere. I find indeed these Words dropt by an ingenious and very learned Antiquarian, *viz.* True Christianity as delivered by its Author and his Disciples, is quite another Thing than what Bigots and Fanatics are wont to represent it. It enjoins and forbids nothing in Moral Practice, but what Natural Religion had enjoin'd and forbid ; neither indeed could it, because one of God's Revelations cannot contradict another, and because he gave us the first to judge all others by. Accordingly, we find, that though it be one of the great Ends of Christianity (though not the main and peculiar End, as we shall shew hereafter) to advance the Practice of Moral Virtue amongst Men, Holy Scripture does not contain any regular or compleat System or Digest of Moral Laws ; the occasional Precepts there delivered, how excellent and divine soever, arising only from the Conjunctions and Circumstances that were the Subjects of those Preachings and Writings in which such Precepts are found. For the rest—For a general Knowledge of the whole Body of Moral Duty, the great Pandect of the Law of Nature is held open by them to be search'd and study'd. Finally, says the Apostle, *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever*

ever things are of good Report, think on (that is, study) these things.

To which I answer. Whatever the Conjunctions and Occasions might be upon which the Precepts were delivered, it is easy to put them together, and to view their Aim. The Law of Nature, the Light, Reason, Conscience of Men, were not intended to be set aside. This it is monstrous but to name. But there may be a Design there, to which the Precepts may be adapted, and answering, that make a compleat System of Morality, aiding not annulling whatever might be said by the wisest Heathens, and such as nothing can be added to it, or spar'd out of it.

Of the relative Duties, except such as have been egregiously transgressed, it cannot be suppos'd you are to find here a downright Formulary. For these are sufficiently provided for by the Light of every Man's own Mind. But as Mankind had forsook the Law of Nature, the Law necessarily to be observed, the Rules essential to their Happiness, it was necessary they should be recalled. And here it is the Precepts of Christianity come in.

The Basis of the whole is Life eternal, brought to Light, or delivered with full Authority, and tender'd upon Terms agreeable to the Nature of their Case, and so as to answer the best and wisest End. This is the Basis; and the next Thing is Repentance. The next is to seek the Kingdom of God and

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its Righteousness; in which single Precept is
 graft together whatever is contained in the
 Law of Nature, and whatever may be added
 by the creative Power of God himself: The
 next is true Heroism, or never to depart or
 shrink from what is right, in any Case what-
 ever: The next is the Love of Mankind, to
 be exerted in bearing witness to and promoting
 the Truth, as being the greatest Good: To
 lay aside what might hinder its Progress, to
 make that Progress your supreme Aim and
 Delight, and to act agreeably in all Things:
 To postpone every Thing to it, particularly
 such Things as are pursued by the ambiti-
 ous, covetous and sensual: To keep to the
 Practice of the relative Duties in an exem-
 plary Way; by this Means doing your Part
 in Life, and at the same Time setting for-
 ward what is here intended: To possess your
 Mind with such Desire of it, as to be offended
 at whatever obstructs it, however otherwise
 related to you; and to study to be prepared
 to suffer and even die for its Sake, should
 need be. Add the Instructions for begetting
 in Men the Virtues and Qualifications pro-
 per to the receiving, teaching and propaga-
 ting it; the wisest ever given; and that to
 such as make this Faith the Principle of their
 Conduct, all Crimes past are forgiven, all
 their present Failings are provided against,
 in case of such Conduct; that all Motives
 and Assurances that can be made use of, are
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made use of, and most perfect in their Kind ; that all Things avail, or otherwise, as they beget in us this Disposition ; and that whenever this shall be the Case, the Consequence must be, that every Man must be happy in himself, and 2. in others. In himself, because surrounded with endless Advantages, provided he performs his Duty, and knows his own Happiness ; and in others, because they must be of such Temper as he must wish they should be ; and 3. because in whatever Nation this Rule is received and followed, its Government, and every Thing else belonging to it, must be what, setting aside all irregular Desires, he must wish they should be. And the same may be said of the World in general.

In the mean time, granting this is not the Case, or that neither the World in general, nor any one particular Nation is such, but in a great Measure the Reverse, here are Supports, and a certain Remedy prepared to his Hand. Add, that the Rule is so amiable as to want no Recommendation, so back'd as to want no Authority, and so circumstanced, it cannot fail of Success. All which Things are so clearly held out in the Holy Scriptures, together with whatever else is necessary, it cannot with Justice be affirmed, they don't contain any regular or compleat System or Digest of Moral Duties, when, on the contrary, it is so plain they contain one

so perfect, it is impossible to conceive any Thing should be added to it, or spar'd out of it, as one might reasonably imagine they must do, were we unable to give an Instance of it, or to make it appear.

Another Thing, which I think some sort of Contradiction to what is here said, and Diminution to the Rule itself, is thus express'd:—He (*Milton*) found *Homer* possess'd of the Province of Morality; *Virgil* of Politics; and nothing left for him but that of Religion. This he feiz'd, as aspiring to share with them in the Government of the Poetic World; and by Means of the superior Dignity of his Subject, got to the Head of that Triumvirate which took so many Ages in forming. These are the three Species of the Epic Poem; for its largest Province is human Action, which can be consider'd but in a moral, a political, or religious View; and these the three great Creators of them; for each of these Poems was struck out at a Heat, and came to Perfection from its first Essay. Here then the grand Scene is clos'd, and all further Improvements of the Epic at an End.

If by this is meant, that Morality was carry'd up to its Height by *Homer*, Policy by *Virgil*, and Religion by *Milton*, and this be true, we have nothing to do but to endeavour to acquire a right Understanding of, and to raise our Taste up to these three fine Authors:

Authors: For by this Means we shall become Masters of every Thing of Moment to us. But without minding what the Critics may say of the Nature of an Epic Poem, it seems absurd to suppose any one of the three has done what is here suggested. The Reason is, all Morality, Policy, Religion, that can be said to be perfect, must begin where this Rule does, and propose the End it proposes. It must begin with removing that Selfishness of human Nature, which hath ever perverted the Hearts of Men, however brave, wise, or learned. And no Morality, no Policy, no Religion, no System of this Sort, can be true, or of much Value, but that which teaches to reverse that, and to build your Conduct or Character upon that Principle which bids you look forward to the State mention'd, and to endeavour to shine in it. This is the Doctrine taught by Divine Inspiration; and if you would act as the Nature of Things demands, necessarily to be comply'd with, and with which he who complies will not think *Achilles* or *He^tor*, *Æneas* or *Ulysses*, the Characters he is to emulate; but having found in what Manner he must exert himself, in order to do the greatest Good to Mankind, this will be his Province.—A Province not yet seiz'd by any Epic Writer, nor insisted on by *Milton*, tho' Religion was his Theme.—A Province certainly the noblest in the World, though by

no Means a popular one. And the Character hath been drawn to the Life, notwithstanding it does not hit the common Taste. And it is a clear Demonstration of the Perfection of this Rule, and of the Defect, I had almost said Impertinence, of all others, though embellish'd and grac'd with all the Advantages the greatest Wits could throw about them, that in the present Circumstances of the World the supreme Object of every truly great Mind must be the Recovery, the Re-establishment of the Truth ; and no moral Character, however well drawn, can be said to be such as may properly be propos'd to Imitation, in which that is not the prime, the most shining Part. So that I conclude, that if an Epic Poem may be said to intend Instruction, and to be valuable from its Use, we still want an Epic Poem. But then this Want is supply'd by the History of the Life and Passion of our Saviour, and by the Precepts delivered by him and his Apostles.

— — — — *To him, to him 'tis given
Passion and Care, and Anguish to destroy :
Thro' him soft Peace and Plenitude of Joy
Perpetual o'er the World redeem'd shall flow.*

Which is so far right. But,

No more may Man enquire or Angel know,
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is not so ; because, let the Doctrine be understood and practised, and this must be the Consequence ; not through supernatural Influences or internal Operations, though those are proper in their Place, but by a direct intelligible Conformity of the Principles and Actions of Men to it. At the same Time assure yourself God will bring the World to that Knowledge and Practice. For, for this End was it made, and the Rule is connate to its Idea, and antecedent to its Existence.

To raise Mankind to the highest Pitch of Virtue, which, as I observed before, is Benevolence to be exerted in the Restoration or Re-establishment of the lost Truth. Thus, succouring the present System in the best Manner, and preparing for another proposed as the End of this, in Concurrence with the Divine Providence all along, and agreeably to the Principles planted in us, and which bespeak this, and to the Nature and Tendency of the Christian Precepts, is either right, or it is impossible to know what is so. For what is the Thing proposed here ? Is it not that Men act as they ought ? To your Natural Religion then superadd this—That it is your prime Duty to aim at this. What Objection ? 'Tis plain there can be none. If then there is no Objection to it consider'd as an Article of Natural Religion, you must either receive it as propos'd here, or shew a Reason why you won't comply with what is impos'd

impos'd by God, when it is manifest, had he not done so, you ought to have impos'd it upon yourself, had you known your own greatest Interest. If you can't do this, you must own it is reasonable to admit that Method. And that this is the Method you should admit, is plain, because it answers every wise and good End you can think of. And if this be true, this Proposition must follow, *viz.* That the Revelation made by Christ may be accounted for in a rational Way, and demonstrated from its Effects, and our Principles in regard of Religion, Government and Civil Life, may be such as can neither be rejected nor exceeded. The Consequence of which let them consider whom it most concerns. Zeal for Establishments is pernicious, as we see, but Zeal for Truth is Strength and Glory. Let us not then be zealous for our Establishment only, but for the Truth, that so the Establishment may receive the Benefit of it. They, in particular, who have read the Disturbances in the Church occasioned by the most trifling Disputes from the Beginning, and consider what Mischiefs they have caus'd, must be pleas'd to find this Rule, which hath been so much wrested and misapply'd in itself, the most rational and beneficial Rule imaginable ; that let Men be guided by it, and they must of consequence be the best Magistrates, Subjects, Masters, Servants,

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Friends,

Friends, Companions, Soldiers, Dealers, and whatever else you can desire ; that the whole World so principled must make a compleat System of rational Creatures, as happy in themselves and others, and in every respect, as was intended. And they who are griev'd at the Differences of Men about Things not essential to the main Design, must be pleas'd to find, that the main Design is no other than to bring all Men to a right Understanding, and to the Practice of what that right Understanding shall dictate to them, affording all the Directions and Materials necessary ; that let them pretend to what they please, —be politic, r^{ch}, learned, honourable, powerful ; yet all this is nothing, neither can there be any thing truly valuable in them, till they have got this *παδιγγεδία*, this new Way of Thinking and Acting here inculcated ; and though the boasted Works of the finest Authors, with all their Life and Fire, and whatever you can ascribe to them, must sink in their Esteem, yet this will be compensated by what is so manifestly the true Light, requiring Power should answer the End of Power, Distinction of Distinction, Learning of Learning, and that the Pleasure Men have in Life should not rise from the Consideration of the Things themselves, but from the Consideration of the Good done to the Public by them.

'Tis true indeed, this Regeneration, this Conformity of Principle and Action to the Doctrine taught in a supernatural Way, tho' in itself the most rational Thing in the World, being in reality no more than abstracting us from that Model of Life, into which the World is degenerated, and teaching us to think and act according to that Order, which being observ'd, every Thing would answer its End: This Conformity, I say, has been look'd upon as mysterious, as a supernatural Birth produced in Men by the working of the Spirit immediately. But this is certainly straining the Thing too far. For though the Minds of the first Teachers were so influenc'd, as was necessary, yet there cannot be that Necessity for that Influence now the Doctrine is taught. And a bare Compliance with that Doctrine is undoubtedly sufficient, especially if you add to it the Assistance of the same Spirit whenever it shall be needful; and as he who conforms thereto must act so as to produce that Happiness which would be felt, were that Order observed, or did Power answer the End of Power, Distinction of Distinction, Learning of Learning, all the World over. And though it should be granted, that the Precepts of Christianity, such, I mean, as have an immediate Tendency to draw Men into a better State, might have been found out and taught by the due Exercise of human

Reason only, yet still a Method there must be to effect it. So that except the Deists can produce us a Rule attended with such a Method, or shew how the Rule they shall produce may obtain its Effects without one, it is Impertinence to blame us for approving this Rule and Method, and thinking it an Instance of the best Sense to do so.

In short: Whatever Interpretations of the sacred Text may have been made, the Things propos'd there are so easy to be understood, and so correspondent to the Principles of every Man's own Heart, it is almost impossible they should be rejected by them, especially when view'd in their true Light. For the Law of Nature — the Order to be observ'd by Men, is — That each contribute to the Good of the whole: that, in order to rise into a distinguish'd Character, he be able to deny himself any present Gratification for that Purpose; that he adhere steddily to what is right, however incommodious that may be, or whatever he suffer by it, depending upon the divine Being for the Consequence. This is necessary to the Support and Improvement of the World, and seems to have been pretty well understood by the wiser Heathens; as is evident from the following Lines.

— *Hi mores, hæc duri immota Catonis
Secta fuit, servare modum finemq; tenere,
Naturamq; sequi, patriæq; impendere vitam,
Nec sibi sed toti genitum sè credere mundo.
Huic Epulæ viciſſe famem, magniq; Penates
Submoviſſe hyemem tecto, pretiosaq; vestis
Hirtam membra ſuper Romano more Quiritis
Induxiſſe togam: Veneriſq; huic maximus uſus
Progenies; urbi pater eſt urbiq; maritus,
Justitiæ cultor, rigidi ſervator Honesti,
In commune bonus: nulloſq; Catonis in actus
Subrepſit partemq; tulit ſibi nata voluptas.*

All which we maintain is right and undeni-
able. But as this Order of Things was not
observ'd, neither was the Innocence of Men
such that a future State could be claim'd, or
even inferr'd with sufficient Authority; nei-
ther could Men pretend to say with Certainty
their Sins should be forgiven; it is manifest
Christianity comes in here opportunely to
their Assistance. And as it is not possible
Men should be happy without that Order,
the Knowledge of which to the generality
was lost, neither could they attain to the
Knowledge of it, much less to the keeping it
inviolably of themselves; therefore the Pre-
cepts, the Power, the Assistance, and all the
Advantages here afforded, were necessary;
and being pointed at the Recovery of that
Order, right. And this, in these Circum-

stances, being the most important thing, it is a clear Proof of the Truth of Christianity, that it inculcates it accordingly, laying Stress where it ought to be laid. And thus neither the one nor other can be deny'd; and put them both together and you then have a compleat Rule, adapted to the Exigencies of our present State, the latter being distinguish'd by this — that it supplies all the Defects of our present State, turning us at the same time to one, which being accomplished, is the thing we want, and out of which we shall never gain what we want, be our Circumstances what they will. Then in the third place, as to the Practices of Men, and the Permission of such a State as this is, this in itself is by no means reconcilable to the Wisdom and Goodness of the Creator; but allowing, nay demonstrating it to be permitted for the noblest End — the Glory of such as shall preserve their Integrity, and the Reward of all, who seeking after the divine Will, shall in any degree have contributed to the forwarding it, it is so, and shews the Scheme is compleat, however difficult it might be to us to take a full View of it.

These are the Reasons I think this System of Morality, this Rule of Life perfect, and such as is not to be found elsewhere, as is manifest from the Nature of the Things prescribed by it, which are strictly reasonable, and demand our Assent to them from their Usefulness

Usefulness only. And this I have endeavour'd to shew, persuaded that if Christianity can be defended upon Principles of Reason wholly and solely, nothing can give so much Strength to the common Cause. It is high time such Principles and Reasons should be laid before Men, and every Effort us'd, when Religion is universally fallen into Contempt, and this Nation, once so famous for opposing the Wiles of such as have corrupted it, is got into the other Extreme, and nothing will do but rejecting the Truth itself. It is high time to look about us, when the Age in which we live is sunk into such Levity and Corruption, that we are in danger of falling back into the Condition of the most ignorant and gross Times, and losing all the Advantages the glorious Stands and Labours of our late Countrymen have purchased for us. Opposition to the Truth cannot hurt it, except in case of the utmost Degeneracy, or when all Things in Church and State, tho' not altogether venal, are yet dispos'd of without regard to their End. For then such Persons as should be Advocates, will generally want the Capacity, and such as have the Capacity will temporalize, and so rather help to confirm Men in their Prejudices, than to remove them. Which shews us the Excellence of this Rule, seeing there is no Good to be done at all, without that abstracting ourselves from the World, it teaches, and making it a Principle

ciple of civil Life. And indeed, tho' it was certainly weak enough so to mistake that fine Principle, as to draw the monastic Life out of it, that so Men might serve God more perfectly, when according to the main Design of the Rule itself, the only way to serve him is to promote his Kingdom, by being Examples of the essential Virtues, and using the Means prescribed ; yet even this is better than to protest against the Corruptions of Popery, and at the same time be intent upon the Gratification of that Ambition, which, e'er that Design can be accomplish'd, is necessarily to be destroy'd. There is a certain fix'd Ratio in Life, which being observed, Men must answer every End of their Existence, and the strict Observation of which is for that reason required. And nothing can break in upon that, or pervert Things more, than when, instead of attending to that, some seek to indulge their irregular Desires and most shameful Lusts at any rate, and others employ their Power and Influence in favour of them, either in contempt of that, or at best thro' a scandalous Neglect or Inadvertency. This I know is an unpopular Truth, but I cannot help insisting upon it. For what doth it signify to have elop'd from Superstition, if the Rule is either evaded or not apply'd ? In a word : The World is a beautiful Scene of Things, excepting only such Vice as is pernicious to particular Men, and the

Love of Power, Riches and Honour for their own Sakes, which is pernicious to Society in general, as it destroys that Order upon which the Happiness of human Life depends, and as it makes Men studious of distinguishing themselves in a way that is foreign to the Design of the Creation, as is easy to see. For natural Religion, or the Law of Nature, is comprehended wholly in the Love and Observance of Truth; and Benevolence to be exerted chiefly in the Recovery and Re-establishment of that Truth, is the End of reveal'd Religion. And as human Nature is a rational Nature, and under the Guidance and Protection of an omnipotent Power, the reason of the thing coincides so perfectly with what is reveal'd, it is impossible not to see that this is the sole Thing intended. And therefore if Men would discredit Christianity, they must shew that the Things it opposes, and will put an end to, are just and reasonable, and the Things it proposes wrong. Till then their Arguments must be ridiculous, and all that abet or are led by them, call them Princes, Dukes, Lords, Gentlemen, or what you please, are no other than evil Agents, who trample upon the natural Rights of Men, neglect the Design for which such Distinctions were made, and are Instances of that Weakness and Corruption into which it is possible human Nature may be degraded. And tho' we must not pretend to force the

Doctrine

Doctrine upon them, nor molest them personally either by Word or Deed, because it is necessary to the future Scheme that each have his Trial, that so he may be distinguish'd accordingly ; for which reason the Apostle says, *If any Man seemeth to be religious, and yet bridleth not his Tongue, that Man's Religion is vain*, James i. 26. yet this in general we may say — they are unworthy of the Honours and other Advantages they hold in the Societies of Men, or indeed of having any Part at all in them. But no more of this : My Design is not only to defend the Rule against the Misrepresentations and Cavils of Infidels, but to facilitate its Progress. For if Men once come to see it as it is in itself, they cannot but embrace and cherish it. And as other Arts and Inventions have in some measure made way for it, and there is amongst some People in this Nation at least a Disposition to listen to what is reasonable, so I cannot but think the Time approaching when great Improvements of this sort shall be made. We must not either thro' Hope or Fear dissemble the Truth in the smallest Instance, nor yet carry Things farther than is necessary. We must not pursue nor regard the Things of the World abstracted from their End ; but to the necessary Distinctions in Life Regard we must pay, and at the same time make proper Allowances to the Weaknesses of human Nature ; studious by all means

means to promote its present Peace and future Advancement, and regarding in a peculiar manner such as according to the Intention of Christianity make it their Busines to do so. Above all, we should endeavour to represent it in so rational a Light, and make it appear so perfectly beneficial, that the Communities of Men may not only receive it themselves, but become zealous of its Propagation, and those to whom it shall be propos'd may have nothing to object.

This last Part I ground upon those Words, *Job xl. 6. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the Whirlwind, and said,*

7 Gird up thy Loins now like a Man: and I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

8 Wilt thou also disannul my Judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayst be righteous?

9 Hast thou an Arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a Voice like him?

10 Deck thyself now with Majesty and Excellency, and array thy self with Glory and Beauty.

11 Cast abroad the Rage of thy Wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him.

12 Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low: and tread down the Wicked in their Place.

13 Hide

13 *Hide them in the Dust together, and bind their Faces in secret.*

14 *Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own Right-hand can save thee.*

It hath been prov'd that there is a wise and good Intention in the Creation and Permission of this System ; and I shall now shew that this Intention not being answer'd, is entirely owing to the Lufts and Weaknesses of Men ; that tho' that Intention is obstructed and defeated now, yet it must be answer'd, because otherwise the World could not be said to have been made to any good Purpose ; neither could any Man, of any Sort or Character whatever, attain the End he was made for, and for which his Principles and Affections were planted in him : that this End cannot in the nature of Things be attain'd in the World as it is now constituted : and therefore that Things must be, and are so over-rul'd and directed as to attain that End : that as this is capable of Demonstration, and has been demonstrated, so this being the whole Drift and Aim of the Christian Scheme or Revelation, that Scheme or Revelation are clearly and fully demonstrated thereby. Which Points being prov'd, will give us a right Idea of the Nature of our Rule, demonstrate the Rule itself, and shew us how by means of it we may be possessed of that perfect Knowledge, which is necessary

sary to our just Conduct and Support in this Life, and Preparation for the next; a thing of all others of the greatest moment to Mankind.

The Being, Attributes, and most perfect and amiable Character of the Deity, are capable of Demonstration. The Relation we stand in to him, and the Regard we owe him, is capable of Demonstration. And because Happiness is the End of the Creation, and there are certain Things pointed out by their Tendency and Necessity thereunto to be observ'd, these too are capable of Demonstration. Every Man therefore should know that Intention, and consider how he must act in consonance to it; how he may be serviceable to the whole; what the World stands in need of; how far his Power extends; and what he is to do according to the Nature and Circumstances of the Condition he is in, or the Capacity he has. And did Men act thus, the Consequence is plain: for then the World, consisting of so many distinct Communities, would be regular, as it would be one great Community made up of so many less, and every Community made up of so many distinct Bodies, Corporations, Towns, Parishes, and these of so many distinct Families, consisting of so many distinct Persons.

Every Person is a Member of that one great Community, and therefore oblig'd, according

cording to that Intention, to study the Good of all. And the Way all shall know and be bound to the Performance of what will secure that Good, is, that every Individual be taught, that this is the Will of the Author, because this will bind him to that Performance. So that the first Source of Happiness is, that Men have right Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, or, in other Words, that their Religion be uncorrupt and pure.

The next Thing is, that every Member, if possible, be so educated and instructed as to understand the End and Design of all civil Institutions in general, and particularly what their own unalienable Rights and Privileges are, what true Liberty is, and that Power is entrusted to Governors for the Support and Defence of that Liberty ; that it is essential to the Welfare of the Community, that Power so employed be supported with Estate and Life itself, if demanded ; and that it is no less essential to that Welfare, that the Members know the Nature, and desire the Power be such ; or, in other Words, that the Government of the Community be a reasonable Government, or such as will answer that Intention.

A third Thing is, that the Relations betwixt Prince and Subject, High and Low, Master and Servant, be well understood, that is, that as the Prince demands that his Power be

be held sacred, as it is the Administration and Execution of such Laws as shall secure to his Subjects their Civil and Religious Rights, which is true Liberty, so he discharge his Part in duly attending thereunto; and as Superiors demand of their Inferiors Place, Deference, Esteem, Support, &c. so according to their superior Advantages and Abilities, they should be industrious to consult and promote their Welfare, and attend to that duly; and as the Master expects from his Servant Obedience, and the due Performance of his Duty, so he should secure to his Servant what is necessary to his comfortable Subsistence, and all other reasonable Advantages; and all Persons, whatever Trust or Office they are in, should consider the Duty requir'd, and attend to that duly; or, in other Words, they should understand and attend to the reciprocal Duties and true Harmony of Life, and contrive to the utmost of their Power, that others do so too.

Now the Advantages of all this are,
 1. That though all Men are not to be happy in the same Manner, nor to have the same Privileges, as they are not blessed with the same Abilities; yet all are to be happy, each in his particular Manner.

For the Rule is, that each contribute his Part to the Public, directed by the Circumstances he was born under, or is plac'd in. If, considering what those are, and what Relation

lation he stands in, he acts accordingly, he does his Part; and so far all is right. And if upon Demand or Emergency he acquits himself with eminent Virtue, or contributes remarkably to the common Weal, he ought to be distinguished. In the mean time, he will be contented and pleased with the Condition he is in, till by acting his Part well, or living in Sobriety, Piety, Justice, and all other social Virtues, he betters that Condition, or finds an Opportunity of exerting himself in an uncommon Manner.

And then, 2. As a Desire to promote public Good, or to add to the Happiness of that Community, or of the Species itself, is the Result of Virtue, and Virtue the necessary Choice of a good Understanding, so Persons of Distinction will be ever intent to act agreeably, and to signalize themselves in this Way. They will encourage and promote every Thing that tends to the Good of others, even to the denying themselves a thousand inferior Gratifications. And thus all Men in their several Stations and Degrees must be happy in themselves and others, in their Government and mutual Society; and their Religion, being the true one, will give such Strength and Confirmation to that Happiness, nothing can be more rational or excellent in its Degree.

This is the Religion, Government and Society intended to be recall'd by Christianity; and

and it is not possible any Man should gainsay what is here offer'd to him, his own Reason approving and acquiescing in it as naturally as it must own two and two make four, or that Happiness is better than Misery. How then does it happen there are so many Obstructions to it, or that it is so little seen in the World? The Answer is, The same Weakness which introduc'd Vanity at first, still keeps it up, and creates the Opposition and Aversion to Truth you complain of.

Man has an Understanding given him to be a Guide, and to point out the End to which his Principles and Affections should move him. Suppose the first neglected, and the other moving and instigating, not to that End, but another. Conceive the World model'd accordingly, and the Understandings of Men form'd upon that Model, or that the Notions they have are thence; nay, farther conceive those Principles and Affections, not only inciting them to a wrong End, but themselves grown irregular, violent, ungovernable. With this Key you will easily unfold all the Mysteries in human Life, and see what excellent Creatures Men are. For suffering the Understanding to lead, the Result would be, that each Man would exert himself in knowing and doing his Duty, or in acting in Consonance to the original Order of the World, and in distinguishing himself as an Instrument of Good to others, as far

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as his Opportunities and Abilities would admit. But now lay that aside, and suppose the World thus model'd, and then Men will exert themselves in a Way that is its Reverse ; and no Care being taken to inform their Chiidren of it, or to prevent its sad Effects, they will take it for an unquestionable Truth, that what they see in the World is natural and right, though no Title of it is so. And thus you see how Truth and the Customs and Fashions of the World parted Hands, and divided, and they have ever since been at the greatest Variance imaginable.

From this Source, I say, you may derive all the Mischiefs in human Life, and particularly the absurd Characters. For if observing what appears most excellent, the Mind attends to that, and that is Pre-eminence in the Things of Life, without Regard to that prime Intention, it is plain the Mind will always be in a State of Emulation, not how it may answer that Intention as well or better than others, but how it may excel in what it deems excellent. And according as a Man is determin'd to think this or that, so his Pursuits and Desires will be determin'd. So that this Emulation shall be Covetousness in one Man, and Ambition in another, each having fix'd in his Mind, that the Object he pursues is most excellent ; and though both the covetous and ambitious Man

are odious Characters, yet succeeding in their Pursuits, they will have the Pleasure, Confidence, Assurance, Joy of those who possess what is truly excellent ; while those who are possess'd of it, finding it not so in the Opinion of the World, are dejected, or at best supported by the Hopes and Expectations of a wiser State of Things.

Human Nature is a rational and social Nature, and accordingly has every proper Principle in it. One it has in an eminent Degree, and that is the Desire of Excellence, as I observed before. But not taking Advice of its Reason to know what is so, it longs and rages after what it deems so ; and being successful, its Ambition is as much gratify'd, as though it had performed that Part, or acquir'd those Virtues, to perform and acquire which that Principle was design'd to prompt it. Thus you shall see two Men duelling upon a Point of Honour, though no two Characters were perhaps ever further removed from what is truly honourable. Thus the Covetous and Ambitious, though real Pests, hope to ascend and shine ; and there is no Man so base, but Regard must be paid to him, or he is absolutely undone.

Besides that this is the Cause of all manner of Affectation in Dress, Equipage, Entertainment, Ceremony, Fashions, and Men beg, purchase, flatter, bribe, and what you will, to gratify it ; you can cast your Eye

no where, but you see Instances of it. One holds out a long Scroll of Titles, Grants, Honours, &c. another talks of nothing but what is great; a third despises that, and is a Wit, *Ipse facit versus*; another declares he has no Religion, and expects you should admire that genteel Turn in him; another owns such a Foible is his, and is that of the Family, and yet no Family, he thinks, ever had so many good Qualities; the Rich values himself upon his Wealth, and yet the Poor, though he ducks to him, is better in his own Opinion: Nay, this is the Reason few are able to allow those Things excellent, that are so, except when they favour their Party or Interest, or their Applause is stolen from them by Art or Surprize, and that when an uncommon Character breaks out, there are so many that hate and bespatter it. But above all, observe a Person *non compos mentis*, and you will there see how this Principle us'd to operate before that Misfortune, tho' it was then conceal'd; and you may conclude thence it operates in the same manner in others, though they have the Prudence to conceal it.

It is evident from hence, what it is Men aspire at, and what they mean and intend by every Thing they do; and when they have attain'd their Ends, it is plain what you are to do and say, if you would please: For let their Principles, Actions, Persons, Understandings,

standings, Behaviour, be what they will, you see what they would be esteem'd. It is plain likewise, that neglecting the End their Understandings should have pointed out to them, they have generally acted contrary; and laying aside all Thoughts of that Kind, prais'd and extoll'd the Actions of Men, according as they prov'd successful, or appear'd to be the Issue of the best animal Spirits, or such Courage as Men have in common with the Beasts themselves. And in all other Cases the same is true, and human Life hath been, and still is, generally speaking a State of Ambition, Covetousness and Sensuality; the Pleasure Men have is in the Objects of them, and their Emulation wholly and solely about them. All which is quite contrary to Nature, or to that prime Order intended, as well as pernicious to themselves, and exclusive and destructive of their real Good.

For this Reason, in order to act that Part in Life upon which the Happiness of Mankind in general, and your own in particular, depends, it is necessary you should be drawn out of this Road into the right one, that so whatever Station of Life is allotted to you, you may fill it so as to answer the End to others, and enjoy the Advantages of it yourself. For this Purpose is this Rule propos'd; not to level or destroy Rank and Order, but that Men of all Ranks and Orders, following the World as it is now model'd, and

complying with the Customs and Fashions of it, should be call'd off, and taught to reason and act in this Manner.

Want of Attention to this Point is the Reason some Men have depress'd human Nature so low, as to make it perfectly impotent in regard of all Virtue and Goodness; not considering that the Texts seeming to suggest that Notion, speak of the Contrivance and Completion of the Scheme of our Redemption only. Others have took upon them to vindicate it in Terms and Strains so bold and lofty, one would hardly believe they thought us in a corrupt State at all. Whereas the true Case of the World is this, as Experience shows: For we all complain of the Selfishness, Falshood and Corruption of others, and others retaliate, and think they have Reason. And Christianity teaches, *That if we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us*; meaning the Neglect of that End, and our not attending to the true Order of Things. And it is an Instance of the Excellence of our Rule, that it teaches our true Condition, the Corruption or Weakness of our Nature, or the Loss of that right Order, both externally in the World, and internally in ourselves; that instead of considering us as Creatures of such Perfection as some would fain think themselves, it teaches us that all such Ways of Thinking are vain and false; that in order

der to be the excellent Creatures we would appear, we must find this out, and apply for the Cure of it to the Study and Practice of Religion, and Preparation for that Time, when such as shall be fav'd will be made such. And though this gives us but a poor Idea of our present Condition, yet our greater Mischief still is, that through the Blindness of Self-Love we see not the dark Side of our own Characters, nor the Silliness of the Farce into which human Life is degraded ; nay, hence it is, that many Men act and have Pleasure in it, as though it were no such Farce, but a Scene of Truth, Rectitude and Honour, at the Time their own Conduct is most pernicious, detestable, and a Demonstration of the contrary.

Thus much shews, however, that Mankind are gone far out of the Way. But is this all? Or are they likely to stop here? The Reverse is their Case. Their Principles and Affections don't only incite, but are themselves, as I observed before, violent and ungovernable.

The End for which this strong Principle, this Ambition, this Desire of Excellence, is planted in the human Frame, is to be a Spur to what is truly good, and that is to add to the Happiness of this System of rational Beings. Which End taken away, the whole Scene will be a weak, mean Thing, and Mankind may be consider'd as so many Creatures

form'd into several Societies, in which the highest Pitch of Grandeur must be erected upon the Ruins of that prime Order ; the Men of the first Figure in them such as are attentive to every Thing that will give them an absolute Power over ther Fellow-Creatures ; but of executing salutary Laws, and particularly of being govern'd by them, the sole Thing intended, impatient ; and the inferior Sort may be consider'd as such as will vie not who shall act upon that Principle, or acquit themselves in the best Manner in the Road above-mention'd, but in what may give Precedence according to the present Model. And what is yet worse, their Ambition will be so warm, their Tenacity so great, their Attachment so strong, you must not wonder to see them engag'd in Blood and Murder, in Hypocrify and Villany ; and some elated to the utmost Height of Pride and Insolence on account of these Objects of their Lusts ; and others funk down and dying, because they could not obtain them, or a sufficient Portion of them. Add here what the Wise-man observes, *Prov. xxvii. 22. Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.*

It is no Injustice to human Life to represent it as it is, and it is Folly to think better of it than it deserves ; because this is to promise to yourself what it will never afford,

ford, and to mistake the Use intended to be made by it: And besides, it is impossible to form a right Judgment of the Fitness of a Rule given, if we have either too high or too low an Idea of the Nature of those for whose Use it was given.

'Twas thus, however, that Religion, Government and Society were driven out of human Life; and the Design of the Christian Scheme is to recall and establish them. Now you say, How happens it there are so many Obstruction to a Thing so excellent in itself? And to this I answer.

Take Mankind in this View, and in this View they ought to be taken, and then suppose this Rule propos'd to them, together with this Caution, that they must by no Means think themselves fit to understand or bring forth the Fruits of it, till they have entirely renounced the World, or chang'd their present Way of thinking, acting, desiring, into that which is here propos'd to them. Without observing this Caution and Condition, it's manifest, as nothing can be more opposite to the Turn of Mens Minds, the Notions they have, and the Things from which they promise themselves the greatest Gratification, what Adversaries and Opponents it must meet with, how cold a Reception it will find, and what Difficulties will rise up in its Way. It is manifest likewise, how soon such as embrac'd it would be inclin'd

inclin'd to fall away from it ; how soon some would not like to understand it, some to serve their worldly Ends abuse and corrupt it, and others of the same Stamp consent to that Corruption. And so it happen'd as was predicted by the Author, and is well known to every one in the least vers'd in Ecclesiastical Story.

When these Corruptions were grown so shameful, they were no longer to be endur'd, nor could be cover'd, a Reformation was necessary. But then—Take Care of going too far. Absolute Power to Princes, and high Prerogatives to some others, are great Points, and what must not be given up. Thus, though Christianity is the farthest of any Thing in the World from diminishing any Power or Prerogative that can possibly be claim'd, or is consistent with Sense, or is not mischievous in its own Nature, yet the worldly Interests of Men being deeply concern'd in these Points, great Difficulties arose thence, and through Prejudice, and, I think, want of Discernment, they are not, even with us, quite vanquish'd ; though, so long as Men continue undecided in them, it is not possible that Religion, Government and Society should take place, or the People be blest with the Advantages of them, so much as otherwise they might be.

From this Mischief came another : For the Goodness of a Thing being judg'd of by its

its Effects by the Generality, and these not appearing, at least, not so as they might do, the Rule bears the Reproach : And what is worse, its Opposers and Enemies must have the Advantage, and its Advocates be unable to reply, as who neither allow nor apprehend the true Nature and undeniable Excellence of their Rule in some of its main Points.

Nor is it reasonable to imagine, these Things being undetermin'd, Princes should be fond of a Rule, whose Excellence they did not see, and whose Design they might be apt to suspect ; or that Persons of Birth, Distinction, Fortune, Preferment, should admire taking the Cross, bidding adieu to the Pleasures and Glories of the World, and learning to prefer others before themselves, especially when these Precepts were recommended by Persons who they saw had other Things in View. On the contrary, had the Rule been ever represented in its own most amiable Light : Had they been shewn that its Aim and Design, even in regard to them, is the most reasonable Thing in the World, purposing no other Change, than that they mind the End, and not the Thing only ; that in this Method it adds Stability to the Throne, Strength to Power, and Glory to the Crown itself, confirming every Advantage, without taking away ought a wise Prince would not wish might be taken away :

way: Had they seen how it sets the Mind at perfect Ease, compleats every Thing that is good, touches the Evils and Troubles in Life, so that they cease to be such, and the Infirmities of our corrupt and weak Nature, so that they have no Power to hurt us: How perfectly it hits their Case, as well as that of others, rendering each happy in his Station, provided he does his Duty, and meets with suitable Returns from others: That it opposes nothing but what is weak and hurtful, recommends and enjoins nothing but what is excellent: That if they once have a full View of it, it will rise upon them with such Beauty, clear and open, into such Perfection of Life and Glory, 'tis impossible not to be attracted, won, inflam'd, and ravish'd by it: And again, to others had it been shown, that those Virtues are what confirm and add Lustre to Distinction itself, and are not to be found, except in Persons of the most exalted Improvement: That whatever Blessings they enjoy, they are hereby crown'd and finish'd, as far at least as this State will admit, and whatever Damps they might have, remov'd: That their Being, and whatever relates to it, is infinitely better than they themselves can wish or think of; and that upon a full View of the Rule it must rise upon them with such Beauty, clear and open, into such Perfection of Life and Glory, 'tis impossible not to be attracted, won,

won, inflam'd, and even ravish'd by it: Had this, I say, instead of drawing such Inferences for the Sake of such Things as the Rule abhors, and is intended to destroy, been urg'd with Fidelity, Care and Resolution, or in the true Spirit of Primitive Christianity, it could not have met with such Obstruction, nor had its Authority and Truth been disputed or suspected; nor had there been any Difficulty in a Transition so reasonable as from Idolatry to the Worship of God, from arbitrary Power to rational Government, and from irregular and weak Ambition to the Virtues of Society, and what is genuine, laudable and substantial.

I mention not here what is a most material Point, and should ever have been insisted on, *viz.* That as Attachment to present Advantages is the Effect of irregular Ambition, so this challenges that very Ambition. Turn it into this Road and it is right; nay, be it ever so warm, it has Room to work in, and will be compleatly gratify'd, at the same Time the Advantages Men have or are born to in the present State, are in themselves highly valuable, and shall not be taken away from them, but that better may succeed.

But let us leave this Part of the World, and attend to the Behaviour of others. To be remarkably serviceable to Mankind in a Point of the utmost Importance, it is necessary

sary you know what is so, and be earnest to see it take. This you cannot be, if neglecting this, you are turn'd upon other Studies. And though other Studies are by no Means to be neglected, yet are they absolutely trifling in comparison with this. For the grand Revolution propos'd here is a Thing of the very utmost Moment. It is the Happiness of the Species to be compleated and established by the Prevalence of Truth over Vanity and Error, the present State of the World.

Natural Parts join'd to proper Application will gain a Man his End as a Scholar, Grammarien, Mathematician, Chronologer, Astronomer, &c. but to set before you the great Truths discarded by Mankind, and e'er they can be said to be happy necessarily to be recall'd, to resolve to lay out all your Endeavours in the Interest and Success of these, whatever it cost, is the Thing propos'd here. And it is a noble Character, and the Pinnacle of Virtue. But then there are Thorns and Briars in the Way. And here it is the greatest Stress will lye. For if the World be such, the Advocates for Truth must of consequence be oppos'd by the strong Lusts and Prejudices of not only Men, but Men in Power, and upon whose Favour their Success in Things oft highly pleasing, and sometimes necessary, must depend.

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This is a Prospect quite contrary to the sanguine Hopes and delightful Thoughts and Expectations young and ingenious Men are apt to entertain, whose Minds are much more prepar'd for the Intrigues of Ambition, than for so cold a Scene.—A Scene, into which, if they enter with due Resolution, they may fairly bid the World adieu. And though in the Conclusion of a Man's Life 'twill appear much better to have been thus engaged, than to have shone ever so bright in the Eyes of Men; yet such is the Love of present Figure, Men will pursue that with incessant Application, while that which ought to be their End is never once in their Thoughts.

Besides, if such as are endu'd with superior Talents have mean Views, or consider only what Advantage they may procure by them to themselves, either in regard to Reputation or Preferment, those Endowments which posted in their proper Place, or employ'd aright, should have been of so great Use to Mankind, are entirely lost to them, or at least to this great Cause. It is certain, Knowledge is a Thing of the greatest Value, and it is necessary Men should be set aside on purpose to communicate it; Leisure and a suitable Subsistence being allow'd on purpose. That Leisure and Subsistence Numbers will desire and obtain. The Consequence of which will be, you shall have Books without End, each

each being easy to fancy himself fit to be an Author, and to communicate somewhat of Importance to the World. And then the Character of a great Scholar being view'd with Admiration, who but must be admir'd as a great Scholar ! and Place and Preferment must follow. Thus the World is stock'd with Orators, Philosophers, Logicians, Casuists, Professors of Languages, History, Poetry, Critic, and Divinity itself. But will they be equally zealous for the Truth, and its Success and Propagation ? The contrary is Fact. For propose to them the Principles of Religion, Government and Society, as exhibited in the Gospel indeed, but inconsistent with the Model they live and were educated under, and then you will see how far these Men, otherwise of good Repute, are yet remov'd from that noble Character. This is manifestly true of Countries where there are great Corruptions. And the same is true, though in a less Degree, in others. Besides, there is a natural Propensity in human Kind to Enthusiasm and Wonder ; for it is the Effect of Weakness; and every Thing that is new, and promises much with sufficient Assurance and some Appearance of Grounds, shall raise a Noise. Sometimes indeed this Noise is the Sound of just Applause, and is right. But our Misfortune is, we labour at this so much, we attend not to the other. Now and then we are alarm'd with

with somewhat of this Kind, and the Number of Books is enlarg'd, though Mankind are the same, and for no other Reason than that Men will study to gratify their Ambition, if possible, but cannot relish that Way in which, would they exert themselves, they must in course contribute to the Benefit of the World in the highest Instance, by forwarding what is of the greatest Moment to it, the Design and End of the Gospel.

Another Mischief is the Number of Books, under the Weight of which the World groans. Men, fonder of Books than good Sense, never think they can have too many; and some imagine, the reading of Books is like climbing a Ladder, and that every Book read is a Step higher: That human Understanding, without proper Culture, must be defective, is plain; such Culture therefore is necessary. But the Knowledge we want is such as will answer all the Purposes in Life. That the Gospel is a perfect Rule we all agree, however we differ in other Points; and it is manifest from the Nature of the Rule itself that it is so. But the Pride of Man would dictate, which argues Perfection; and not learn, which shows Want. And hence it is, that it piles up Books, and Stores of Wisdom, from amidst which it proposes to come forth with great Splendor. The End of Chronology is to measure and ascertain Times, Periods, Æra's: The End of

Natural Philosophy, to discover the Wisdom of the Architect in the material World: The End of Logic, to reason with Certainty as far as our Faculties permit, and to know to stop there: The End of Speaking and Writing, to convey Ideas with Clearness; and the End of Divinity is our Duty. And as this depends upon our having right Notions of Religion, Government and Society, it is of the greatest Importance. This therefore is the Thing we should aim at; here our Time must be well spent: For to cultivate a right understanding of this, to descry and remove Prejudices, and to prepare and open our Hearts for it, is the Way to attain the End we propose by the Acquisition of Knowledge. And that Number of Books some are so fond of is so far from being advantageous without this, that it is an Hindrance, an Obstruction to us, especially when the Rule itself is neglected for the Sake of ought Ostentations, as is common and notorious.

Besides, this Notion of the Necessity of so very much Reading and Learning is mighty pernicious, as it discourages and keeps Men from making use of the natural good Sense they have, and relying upon it with the Confidence it deserves; as it exposes them to Imposture, by obliging them to follow Guides blind enough perhaps of themselves, or wilfully, or both; and as it prevents their

their making themselves Masters of that perfect Knowledge, which is here convey'd, and of which, with proper Attention and honest Means, they are certainly capable.

St. John says, xxi. 25. *And there are also many things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.* And had Authors been careful to observe what the World could well contain, what would serve the Purpose in Hand, and no more, the Way to that true and compleat Knowledge had undoubtedly been more easy. For the Things that concern Men, the most momentous Points, are all plain and consonant to natural Light, to Reason and Conscience. The Law of Nature is the Dictate of human Understanding cultivated as it should be, and which all that read approve. The Duties we owe to the Creator, ourselves, our Neighbour, are all clear as Day, and challenge us; so we cannot reject them, without doing Violence to, and abusing ourselves. And all the Difficulties that are, are the Product of Men wandering out of their own native Light to follow Lust, Craft, Design, and what hath been introduc'd by them, impos'd under the Pretence of Religion or Law, obtain'd by Custom, and is upheld by being receiv'd into civil Establishments, and mix'd with the secular Interests of Men. And therefore it is

not the Light we are to gather from Books only, though that may be of great Use, that must lead us out of all our Difficulties and Perplexities ; but an honest Heart, free from Attachment and all worldly or irregular Ambition, and desirous all People should be so enlighten'd by the Rule, as to receive the Benefit intended by it, and which is not only great, but inexpressible. And it is the Want of this Insight, and this generous Temper, that hath kept Men so long fetter'd to such Doctrines and Practices as are not only an Obstruction to the most amiable Rules and Precepts of the Gospel, but an Argument of the greatest Weakness, and a Reproach to the Species.

Another Obstruction is, relying too much upon Commentators : Not that there may not be Particulars and Circumstances that want to be known in some Cases, which it is the Business of the Learned to set before us. But what I mean is, that relying too much upon them must hinder our taking that general Survey and large View which must enable us to judge of the Rule in its full Extent. In which Case we should see its Pertinency, End, and all Things else, in a Light that would confirm us in its Truth, because they would show us its Nature, and all the Advantages of it. Commentators were Men famous for their Skill in such and such Languages, by the Help of which, as those

Scriptures

Scriptures were originally written in those Languages, they were empower'd to judge of the Sense in their original Language, and in case of Mistake to correct it. Or they were Men learned in such Books as give an Idea of ancient Customs and Usages, from which they could show the Propriety of Expressions which now seem aukward, or to explain Words whose Sense otherwise we could not see. In all which Cases, and others of the same or like Nature, they have their Use. But farther than this they are not to be regarded. And the Reason is, Men, however Learned, are no less apt to be attach'd than the most ignorant ; and you may depend upon it, the Commentator will bring his Prejudices along with him to his Work. Thus the Jew will interpret the Text in his Way, the Papist in his, the Episcopalian in his, the Presbyterian in his. The establish'd Clergy must make all agree with their Establishment ; and Men that have Views and Wants to be serv'd, must take Care not to offend, or seem to glance at the present Powers, lest their Superiors should be disgusted, and they miss of their Aim. But the most discouraging Consideration is, Learning itself cannot enable a Man to make a competent Judgment of the Rule he comments upon, except Truth be the supreme prevailing Object of his Wishes. From which Temper, how far Men are generally

remov'd, our Differences and Animosities sufficiently show. And where this is the Case, or in Proportion as it is more or less so, the Commentator must want Inclination, and, in consequence, Ability, to lead you to what you desire. Hence it is we are requir'd to be absolutely abstracted from the World, as a necessary Preparation for the Reception of the Truth ; without which Qualification, though the Interpretations and Explanations of Men may rectify Mistakes, and bring us nearer to it, so far as relates to the Things they undertook to clear, yet they cannot fully discover to us the Nature of the Rule itself. And our resting satisfy'd with them, and aiming at nothing farther, must be an Obstruction to it, and of so much the worse Consequence, as we shall think we see and have taken the properst Means to do so, notwithstanding that Qualification is wanting, and we have stopt short of the main Thing.

Another Obstruction is, representing the Rule itself as mysterious, and attended with supernatural Advantages and Influences, without shewing the Necessity of them, or accounting for them in the true Way ; nay, pretending they are not to be accounted for, but require an implicit Faith. As to the Oeconomy of the Redemption, if that was necessary, as has been prov'd, that is a sufficient Reply to any Thing that can be objected

jected upon that Head. For God was not only pleas'd to make use of that Method, but it appears manifestly agreeable to Mankind consider'd as free Agents ; and the Rule was communicated by his Spirit, who hath promis'd to such as study and practise that Rule, never to be wanting, but to be with them even unto the End ; and therefore is the praying for the Spirit made necessary and enjoin'd. And indeed, be our Rule ever so excellent, and our Diligence ever so great, it is not possible we should be fitted for a State of Perfection without the Concurrence of the Divine Power and Spirit ; and therefore it is proper and necessary it should be implor'd. Another reasonable Ground for asking it, is the Want of it in extraordinary Cases, such as Martyrdom. And there can be no Impiety or Absurdity in asking it at other Times, or whenever it shall be needful. And yet none of these Cases afford the least Ground for enthusiastic Notions and Swellings, especially as the only Test whereby we know we bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, are Righteousness, Goodness and Truth ; the Things propos'd to us now, and to be compleated hereafter.

To pray for the Means, without endeavouring to know and practise the Rule, is contrary to the Design for which the Rule was given ; and to endeavour to know and practise the Rule, without imploring the

Means of finishing and bringing the whole to Effect, is to leave out the most essential Point. We are therefore to do both, as a plain Reason; for both appear, and they are both necessary. Nor can Christianity be justly blasphem'd for what is so reasonable, nor represented as mysterious, in a Case in which it is so distinct and clear. In the room of which rational Account, as some have presum'd to dispense the Gift of the Spirit, not in a limited or sober Sense, as in the Church of *England*, but in the largest Sense, as in the Church of *Rome*, so there is a Sect among us, who will either be instructed in a supernatural Way, or not at all; and others lay Stress upon such internal Operations and Influences, as being inconsistent with Moral Freedom, must sink the whole Scheme, were they countenanc'd in it.

Of no less ill Consequence has it been to contend, that Faith (meaning the Christian Religion) and Philosophy are irreconcilable. For though the World through Wisdom knew not God, and that Wisdom, or rather that Pride of Wisdom, is condemn'd justly thereby, yet hence it does not follow, that those Things the Philosophers taught, and which are agreeable to Truth, are to be rejected. Human Nature must not be what it is, not to think as they did in many Cases; and their Fault was, that they did not do so in all; and in particular were so defective in the

the prime and most momentous. The Duties we owe to the Divine Being, ourselves, and others, can be rightly apprehended in no Way but one. And Things must be greatly disorder'd and perverted when other Ways prevail. It is true, they were so disorder'd and perverted, and other Ways did prevail ; in which Case, as it was impossible the Philosophers should rectify them, so the Divine Interposition became necessary, as has been shown at large. And it is moreover a Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity, that what was wanted by the Philosophers is supply'd ; what was wrong in them, is stript away by it ; what was true, coincides with it, is fix'd upon its right Basis, and carry'd up to its due Height and Perfection. So that if a Man must assent to those Dictates of Philosophy which are true, or to those of his own Mind, when right, he must assent to this too ; and to represent them as at Variance is no Advantage, but a Mischief to it.

Besides, every Nation, in order to convert others to it, have ever represented it in a Light agreeable to the Scheme of their own Country. In which Scheme there hath hitherto ever been somewhat wrong, and sometimes contrary to common Sense, and shocking. And no Country, except it be our own, hath yet set forth a full, consistent, natural Scheme of it ; nor can this be done till not only

only some Few, but the Community in general be agreed in all Points relating to the Nature of their Rule. From which, how far they are remov'd, is plain. And what is worse, when Things manifestly right are propos'd, Men engag'd in a Party, as attach'd to an Establishment, or a Sect, or otherwise prejudic'd and restrain'd, fall foul upon them. And though Religion, or the Establishment, are in their Mouths, yet the Zeal in their Hearts, we know, arises from another Quarter. And there are narrow Spirits, Enemies to every Thing that is new, without any private Views or Reasons at all ; which narrow Spirit is extremely culpable, not only as it is mean not to desire the Truth may prevail, and as it abuses the best Efforts of human Nature, but as under a pretended Concern for an Establishment, it prevents the greatest Good being done to that Establishment. For the Strength of an Establishment must lie in its Consonance to Truth; and the next Thing to that is a Disposition and Preparedness to admit it. Again,

Men of the finest Taste and Parts finding the Heathen Writers so excellent in Wit, Judgment, Fire, Correctness, Elegance, Sublimity, and whatever recommends an Author, have been carry'd after them with such Thirst, this has scarce been allow'd fair Play ; nor had the Advantages it deserves from such

such Pens as were most able to do it Justice ; nay, they have made the Imitation of them their Way to the Admirations and Applause of the Publick ; and provided they could gain that, no matter what became of this. Thus the Heathen Poets and Orators have been study'd to the Neglect of their Bibles ; though what is so excellent in them is like a Flower out of its proper Place ; and those Faculties of the Mind, which appear so great in their Application of them, must needs appear much more so, when apply'd aright.

To pass by many other Things ; let us suppose the Poet's Design is to give a Picture of a Person of the highest Character in Life. Here the first Thing is to know what is the true State of the World ; and the next, what Providence is, and how it is exerted : For without this, How shall he know what Action is most meritorious, or support his Hero under the Difficulties he must surmount ? 'Tis plain, therefore, that without this his whole Scheme or Plan, however well imagin'd and conducted, must be not only imperfect, but the mere Effort of a Mind displaying its own Powers in a Way not agreeable, not a-kin to the true Nature of Things. And consequently, till these Points are settled his whole Performance will be nothing more than a fine Romance. On the contrary, let these two Points be fix'd, and then,

then, as there is room for the Philosopher, and a right Bottom whereon to build his Philosophy, Knowledge, Wisdom, Morality, Truth, call it what you please, and whereon the Mind rests secure, and is enabled to mount up to the highest Pitch of Virtue ; so is there for the Poet's too, and particularly for the brightest Imagination : For if human Nature is to be rais'd to such Perfection as to make a System of Creatures, who shall fully apprehend, and act agreeably to Truth, they must of course form Scenes of Pleasure, Friendship, Love, Honour, Politeness, Wonder, above the utmost Reach of Art ; and therefore the nearer any Description approaches them, the more excellent it must be. And it is thus, I think, these Powers of the Mind are designed to be apply'd, and not in forming Scenes and Draughts, which have no Foundation in Nature, which never did or will exist.

And as in this Method such Observations and Precepts of Philosophers as are right, and indeed the Sentiments of all wise Men in general, are like a River got into its proper Channel, where the whole Stream runs bright and clear : So it is here, the Poet's Presage of Immortality to himself is right too. For this Desire, this Principle, is planted in our Nature, on purpose to excite in us an Ardour to please by advancing the common Good, and thereby drawing upon our selves

selves the Esteem and Love of our Fellow-Creatures. And every Thing that is said, or done, or writ, in Subserviency thereunto, may claim it, and will ever have it.

Had an Heroic Poem, which is justly esteemed the greatest Product of the human Mind, been rais'd upon this Bottom, it must have been allowed a perfect Piece: The Virtue and Courage of the Hero, in this Case, being such as might be propos'd for an Example to others, and beyond which nothing farther could be demanded, either as to the Greatness or Goodness of the Intention, or the Virtue necessary to execute it. But the World not being sufficiently enlightened, nor the Understandings of the wisest Men able to penetrate so far as to know this, it was not in the Power of the greatest Wits to set so fair a Copy before Men, much less as they wanted the Basis whereon to found it; nor could tell what was the chief Thing to be propos'd, in order to do the greatest Good to Mankind, and to render an Action most valuable. So that whatever Praises are given upon many other Accounts to these Productions, it is certain they won't bear to be examined by this Standard; and to afford Mankind a Rule of Morals, the Divine Being must of Necessity lend an Hand.

But to return to what more nearly concerns us: If Men form their religious Communions upon Doctrines not warranted by Scripture,

Scripture, nor found their Zeal for those Doctrines, must be a great Mischief, not to be cur'd without Alterations, to which we find they ever have great Aversion. For which Reason some admir'd Genius's have advis'd the Terms of Communion should be very large. For as Men are fallible, their Opinions and Decisions may be wrong. And yet however wrong they prove, they will be loth to give them up, especially when Power and Interest are in the Way. 'Twas this drew the *Romans* into the Dilemma, *viz.* Either to give up their own Ends, or impose their erroneous Doctrines upon the People, and procure their Compliance by any Means, however pernicious. And Things are now come to that Pass, Truth itself can find no Admittance there; nay their Religion is that Sink of Pollution, out of which have ascended blind Atheism, and thence Deism, ready arm'd, and fit to encounter Christianity, ever mistaking that Counterfeit for the Thing, the real Substance. Indeed, it is the Way of the World, and the Weakness of human Nature, to endeavour to establish its Interest in a wrong Method. Thus Princes have been us'd to think, the greater and more absolute their Power, the better. Whence Struggles for Liberty on one hand, and Prerogative on the other, sometimes ending in the Destruction of Royalty, and sometimes in that of the true Liberty of the People.

ple. And where this happen'd in a Nature more fierce and rigid than common, it soon shot forth a *Tiberius*, a *Caligula*, a *Bajazet*. And is it not usual with others too, to fancy the more Authority they can claim, the better for them ; and to esteem those their best Friends, who with Resolution and Fury assert their Authority, and to hate others ? The same in Life is so obvious, it is thought absurd to expect a Favour without some prior Obligation, or at least a Power to oblige as the Ground of it. Where then is the Wonder if this Narrowness of Thought does not only make Men jealous, suspicious, crafty, dishonest, exposing them to Temptations to do many Things to their own great Disadvantage ; but likewise that it excludes and prevents that good Understanding and right Temper Christianity is intended to beget in them ? I mean a generous Concern for the Public, Resolution to perform the Part allotted you, and in all other Cases, Resignation. To which just Character whoever attains, will be much better recommended and secured thereby, than by any one Thing in the World besides ; at the same Time that he will no more fear the Loss of Power and Prerogative, than he would to be delivered from an Incumbrance.

If many of the Great themselves are thus attach'd and funk, surely you can't admire that Numbers of such as enter into the Holy Order,

Order, should do it chiefly with a View to their own private Interest ; or that, that Zeal, that Bent of Mind, which stands next to the Divine Interposition and Assistance, should be much wanting ; or that few Teachers are so sensible of the Design, or inspired with such a Love of Mankind, as to make the Success of this Rule the chief Business of their Lives. Nor must you quarrel with Men because this has not been, nor is now a common Thing : For it is manifest, such is the Species, it is scarce possible it should attain this till after Ages past. And it is our Glory it shall attain it at all. The Rule teaches us to avoid Ambition, Covetousness and Sensuality, and to vie in such Things only as may distinguish us for our Affection and Services to the whole Race, and to every Member in it, as Circumstances demand. And could any one have imagined, that Men should prove such able Artificers as to erect that noble Pile (the Church of *Rome*) upon this Foundation ? Or that Men possess'd of a System of Morality, whose cardinal Virtue is Self-denial, should have out-stript the warmest Ambition, undermine the deepest Art and Policy, and stood up supreme in Vanity and Weakness ? And even now can it be supposed all the erroneous Opinions Men have been led into should be removed in an Instant ? Or that they should so apprehend the Nature and Perfection

Perfection of the Rule in all its Parts, as to agree in them, and to become Zealots for them, and for nothing else? Our Lord declar'd 'twas impossible Offences should not come, and the Nature of human Minds shows it is impossible Men should at once be converted and raised all the World over, to such Height as to see and admire it as it deserves. Besides, this Knowledge, this Taste, comes not but by Attention, perfect Humility, a Virtue, of all others, most difficult to be acquir'd, a real Love of Truth, and a Dislike to the Things of the World, got by a clear and competent View of the Effects of that Truth, of the Harmony of the State future, and of the Grounds and Foundation of its Happiness, Security, and Eternity. All which Things rising up to our View with the Strength of Demonstration, make us look back upon the Glories of this State, as upon a little Water which a Man holding in the Hollow of his Hand, at once dashes upon the Ground. But what are these to Men whose Eyes are dazzled, and their Hearts caught and enslaved to Trifles, and to whom the Objects they aspire at, and by Links of Interest obtain, seem Realities and Substances? And therefore it can be no Objection to the Truth of the Scheme itself, that the Contempt of the World it teaches, and the glorious Freedom it requires, are not every where found; that the Want of them

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is an Obstruction to the Doctrine itself; or that one great Part of human Nature, instead of ascending, have work'd so deep, no Light can reach them; and such is the Bent of the other, it can scarce be hinder'd from sinking down after it, not into the same Pit indeed, but into one as bad, with the utmost Obstinacy and Blindness.

Ambition, Love of Fame and Glory, attended with natural Boldness, and an active Spirit, can push Men on to great Attempts. But to be able to quell that Ambition, that Love of Fame and Glory, is a Thing not to be atchiev'd but by having a large View into Nature, and being enamour'd of such Actions. And when you have such View, and are so enamour'd, yet the Reward is distant, and present Things importunate. This was the Cause of the grand Apostacy predicted by Christ and his Apostles, and is the Reason *Nolo episcopari* is oft thrown in the Teeth of the Clergy as a Reproach that may justly be fix'd upon them. But they who are so forward to cast the Reproach, give no Proof of their Sagacity thereby. For it does not follow, that because the Rule is perfect, Men must become Angels the Moment it was given. They are still left to their own Determination, and if it was perfect all along, and will have its Effect at the last, this is the Thing that hits our Case. And though we cannot but wish Men would act up to it, yet the

the Weakness of human Nature will not give us Leave to promise to ourselves too much of that Sort ; nor ought we to be so uncharitable as to conclude, nor can we reasonably conclude, there are no Instances at all of it.

'Tis probable, you (like many others) may think—Most Reverend Father in God, Lord Archbishop, Primate, Metropolitan, &c. Things inconsistent with the Simplicity of the Gospel. And could we with Justice pronounce Emoluments and Titles the sole Things aim'd at, your Judgment must be right. For in this Method it is impossible the End of the Gospel should ever be obtained. But should you examine into the true Character of some most Reverend Fathers I could name to you, you would find that a Mistake: For the Reason they were raised into that Post was, that in all human Probability they would employ the Power and every Thing else entrusted to them with Ability and Faithfulness to the End design'd, and answer the high Character contained in that Title as near as human Nature advanc'd by the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Precepts can be supposed to do. What the Forms of Titles or Distinctions necessary to Society are, is no matter, provided the right Temper and true Character be found there. And when any Method shall appear wherein it shall be so ordered,

that there shall be no more Ambition or Avarice, no more Fraud or Hypocrisy, or perverting of Things to other Uses, certainly we cannot but espouse it with Greediness. But till then we must own this is a Thing rather to be wish'd than boasted of, that the Want of it is one of the greatest Hindrances of what we desire and long for, as well as an Instance of the Necessity of what we so earnestly contend for, *viz.* the Success and Completion of this Rule.

In truth, every Weakness in us may be look'd upon as an Obstruction, and particularly the three Vices above-mentioned. For through these it happens, that those who have it in their Power to forward it by proper Encouragements, by helping such as are in too low Circumstances to afford their Children Education, and laying Stress upon every Way and Means of promoting it, yet these (I say) thinking themselves at Liberty to make use of their Fortunes as they please, 'tis hence the World is in the Condition you see. And Men being observed to be constant in Things whereby their own Ends are gained, but false and dead in other respects; hence human Nature hath been set in the most odious Light, and the very Principles of Morality and Religion not only disputed, but utterly rejected.

I have represented before what the Condition of the World must be did this Doctrine prevail.

prevail. If you conceive it the Reverse, you will come nearer to its true Picture, than should you imagine that its Case. For in Fact there is so little of it seen, such as are of a more generous Disposition find it necessary to look to themselves, to do what they disapprove in their own Defence, or that they may not stand for Cyphers. This is a common Case, and Men have more Love of Right and Truth than appears from their Actions. But such as act upon the Principles of *Hobbs*, make it almost necessary others should act in the same manner, not to be at every turn outwitted by them. So that the Mischief they do in Society is scarce to be conceived. Besides, they are of all Men most busy, active, daring, at Liberty, and can do any Thing with a Grace. For fancying others like themselves, they are ashame'd of nothing. What then must their Conduct be, when Emulation burns, or the Pressures of Life drive on with a Force not to be resisted? Is it not here Corruption is call'd the Knowledge of the World, and this too confirm'd by such general Consent, not to be quick in Hypocrify, and Cacodemony is want of Capacity. This you say is no where to be found but in low Life, and what you say is true. But then, where is that low Life? Where does that most abound, but where there are the strongest Temptations? And where that is I need not say. A still

greater Mischief is, that these most excellent Creatures must have great Power and Influence both in Civil and Religious Affairs, and the Rights of the People depend upon their Regard to that Morality and Religion they would blush to own. Now you are a Member of the Community, and have had the Advantages of an ingenuous Education. The moving Principle urges you on to Interest and Honour, your Capacity, Conduct, and Usefulness to the Public justifying the Pretence. The Question is, which is the Way? Regard to Things of that Sort there is none. What then remains is to entitle yourself to the Favour of such as are in Power, and the Way to that is to consider upon what Principles they act, and what are their Views, and what will be agreeable to them according to those Views: For whatever coincides with them is the Thing pointed out to you. And in this manner it is the Fortunes of Men are too often, if not generally determined.

In Countries where their Religion is an Imposture, and their Government Oppression, this must be the Case. And what can be more despicable or deplorable? Or who would not rather chuse the most ignominious Death, than be dignified in such Communities? And I wish there were not too much Matter of Complaint in others. It is certain, Want of Attention, wrong Cast of Mind,

Mind, wrong Association of Ideas, Engagement in other Pursuits, Infatuation in Prosperity, Warpings of blind Self-Love, Example, Custom, are so far from being the greatest Hindrances, there are Numbers who judge of Principles from what appears; and as Men generally act upon wrong Principles, seem to conclude right, and consequently have as much Assurance, as if there were no other Principles, nor were it possible any Persons should think better, or indeed so well as themselves. Hence their Ignorance of the true Light, and their Immoveableness in it. Others taking Advantage of the impertinent Zeal of some, and the Weakness of others, who set up as Advocates, cast it off as absurd. Others from the Attendance they have by chance given it, having smelt somewhat of its Inconsistency with their Methods of Thinking and Living, desire it may appear mean, the Teachers sink into deadly Compliances, and the World see their Easiness to be made Prostitutes. And much to be lamented it is, that they are often gratify'd in their Desires: Nay, though some stand up with great Resolution and Bravery, yet how soon are the bright Characters lost in the Dirt cast upon them, in the Multiplicity of weak Animals flying with Indignation at them, and through the Blindness of such titular Excellencies as should have espoused and supported them?

Then the Multitude want Discernment to find out the Excellencies of those Characters, by which means they are almost left destitute and forlorn. Add, that there is an Emulation and Envy among the Virtuous themselves, which often defeats the good Intentions, and robs the World of the Advantages it would otherwise have from Men not of Abilities and Learning only, but of remarkable Honesty and great Nobleness of Mind. In the mean time, the Loose and Hypocritical have the World to themselves, can impose upon and make it follow where they please, and are so far from being conscious of any Thing wrong, they don't know it. And such being the Conduct of no small Number of Men, 'tis no wonder this Doctrine should not be much seen into, or cherished by them.

What shall we say of the Want of Care in the Leaders of Civil Bodies, to attend to, to encourage and inforce the Rule by Rewards, and particularly by their own Examples? And in Masters of Families to keep an Eye on the Instruction, Behaviour, and Conduct of their Children and Servants? All which is so common, there are few who can give a tolerable Account of their Business in Life, or the End for which they were sent into the World; but what they do is from Necessity and not Principle. Principles indeed Men have from Parties form'd among

among them. But to search after Truth, and to ground their Principles upon it, is the Case of very few ; nay, 'tis hard to find two Men who have the same Principles, and the greatest Part have really none, except that of Conscience, which they cannot altogether evade. And as one Sort fails herein for want of due Instruction, another does so through the Defects of a superficial Education. So that they see not the true Nature and Design of this Rule, nor the great Good propos'd by it ; at least not so as to engage them in a vigorous Prosecution of that Design, or to give them a Thirst after that compleat Knowledge which alone can enable them to act their Parts in Life to their own greatest Advantage ; not to mention the Satisfaction it must all along afford them, be their Condition what it will.

There is a worse Evil still : Where Men have no certain Principles, their Approbation, Esteem and Praise must be dealt not with any true Judgment, but as they happen'd to be pleas'd, or as Things chanc'd to square with the Bent of their Minds, with the Byass and Prejudices they lie under, tho' unknown to themselves. When any Thing is cry'd up, examine by what Sort of Men the Clamour is rais'd, and you will find the Cause is some particular Turn of their Minds which is hit thereby. Or perhaps their Admiration, which is soon rais'd, and as soon drops

drops again, was mov'd by somewhat—they know not what ; nor is the World ever more whimsical than in its Judgment of Mens Actions : For Success will raise its good Opinion, where there is no room for it, and the Want of that sink it where there is. And as this Want of Stability exposes the Multitude to the Designs of base Men, and to be set afloat by weak ones, so is it a Defence too to what is brought into Practiee thereby : For Things erroneous once approved and received must of consequence be attended with Advantages ; not so, the Truth. Which being observed, Men will make their Court and pave their Way to Honour and Preferment in the same Way, though they cannot but know to their own great Mortification, that notwithstanding the Name and Figure they bear, they don't act what will turn at last to their Account ; and are guilty of dissembling some Truths in Compliance of the Weakness of the World, and for the Sake of that Figure, which, at their utmost Peril, had they been magnanimous, they should have born witness to.

We must not omit the Mischiefs occasioned by Patrons who abuse their Power, and are induc'd either by Flattery or Regard to their own Convenience only to overlook the Charge committed to them. As this bespeaks a mean Understanding and a degenerate, base Spirit, one would imagine the Blot it must fix

fix in their Characters enough to deter Men from it. Were Religion a Thing of no Moment to the World, a Matter of Form, and no more ; or were all the Clergy engag'd in a Cheat, a Craft of their own contriving, in this Case, why should not Men be allowed to act arbitrarily, and to trample it under their Feet at once, despising the Order as a Set of poor Pedants, and villainous, proud Men, and the other as one of those weak Things which are common in human Life, and the Spawn like all Superstition of Ignorance impos'd on by Knavery ? But a very little Understanding will convince us this cannot be so ; and consequently that nothing can be more dangerous, more pernicious, than to offend in a Point of so great Moment, not only as a Person betrays his Trust, acts his Part ill, shows he has no Concern where he ought to have the greatest, and prostitutes what should be sacred to him ; but as he hinders the Good of Mankind, and is guilty of doing to them the most injurious, the most mischievous, nay, the most cursed Thing in the World.

But of all Obstructions the greatest is, the Dislike Men have to the Change of the Standard by which their real Happiness is to be measur'd, and that is, in Proportion as they promote the Good of others, or add by any Means in their Power to the Happiness of the rational System. This, however excellent

lent in itself, is yet extremely opposite to the Bent of all little Minds; nor could you propose ought worse to them than what is propos'd here, *viz.* that laying aside the Prepossessions and Prejudices they are under, they must learn to delight in the beneficent Use of Riches, instead of delighting in Riches themselves; in the due Application and happy Effects of Power, instead of delighting in Power itself; and in what is truly excellent, what bespeaks a wise good Mind, what is agreeable to Nature and the original Frame of Things, instead of delighting in worldly Pomp and Grandeur, or in any other Advantages whatever. And yet however offensive this may be to them, it is not only enjoin'd here, but agreeable to Reason itself. Distinction in a State wherein it could be discerned, must be determin'd by the moral Character only: For Want of which Discernment in this State it is determin'd by Fortune. The greatest Inconvenience of which is, that the Pefts and Plagues of Mankind have been, and may be Men of the greatest Distinction. As such Distinctions therefore answer not the Design of the Creation, they are indeed guarded and secur'd here, because the contrary would be an Inlet to all manner of Wickedness, Confusion and Mifery; but at the same time Men are call'd upon and urg'd to turn their Minds, and to be bent upon what will. And the

the Great and Rich Man in the Gospel is represented lying under the most exquisite Torments. For as no Character is so odious as that of a Man who spends his Fortune in the Gratification of his Lusts, so to prevent it, the Colours are laid on strong. And in the Sense of the Gospel the Hypocrite and Lyar are such, as instead of this Doctrine have invented a new Religion of their own, which is a Lye. And all Religions which instead of this have substituted somewhat else, or lay Stress on other Things, to the Exclusion of it, or weakening of it, are guilty of so much Evasion. Indeed all the Promises of hearing the Prayers, and defending the Cause of the Poor, and pouring Vengeance upon such as wax fat and kick, which abound in Scripture, are Predictions and Engagements of that grand Revolution, when God will destroy the World, and all the Prosperity which either is, or shall be enjoy'd, with generally so much Neglect of, and oft Injury and Cruelty to the poor People.

How great and unspeakable the Advantages of such a Change must be, I have before shewn, and likewise that it makes no Alteration but what is the Interest not only of the World in general, but every Individual in it, let his Condition be what it will. But then this cannot possibly appear, except to such as will study the Rule, and learn to under-

understand its true Nature and Design, which is, that we walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit, or according to this Change: For by the Flesh is meant Passion and the Customs and Fashions introduc'd by it; and by the Spirit is meant that Rule which was taught by the Spirit of God, and which requires us to act as Reason (Reason pure, unperverted, unmix'd, and such as it would have been in a State of Innocence, or had Mankind known no other) directs. Rational Creatures Men by Nature are, being possess'd of the Power, the Faculty; notwithstanding which, Appetite ever had, and now has the predominant Part in their Conduct and Determinations; not only introducing the past and present Customs and Fashions of the World, but having the greatest Sway in, and giving the chief Cast to the largest Part of the Distinctions made contrary to that true Order, which, did Reason solely preside, they must have observed. And the Busines of Religion is to bring Men to the Observation of that Order; not apprehending which, one Sect among us have cast off all Regard to human Distinctions. And if instead of building upon Doctrines not tenable, and appearing singular in the Cut of their Coats, and obtuse Dress, they had contended for such Society as must follow, were the Standard chang'd, and declared against all Distinctions not consonant thereunto, no Objection

Objection could have been brought against them, except that the Christian Rule is not to be propagated and established in that Way; but on the contrary, by the good Example of its Professors, manifested by their virtuous, and recommended by their engaging Behaviour, and supported by a right Understanding.

Children born to the Drudgery of Life are taught to renounce the Pomp and Vanities of the World, though they, poor Creatures, were never doom'd to be much tempted that Way. The Doctrine, though proper always, is yet to be apply'd particularly to the Rich and Great: For the very Essence of what is propos'd and demanded is, that they, instead of using the Advantages they have in the common Road, should do it in the Manner here suggested. To teach this, is to teach Christianity. O were it every where, in all Countries, thus taught! O were it constantly thus taught in our own! How many, instead of professing one Thing and acting another, would be brought to express it in their Manners, and to conduct agreeably to the new Standard, to be not formally but effectually converted to it! 'Tis true, the mere Principle of Self-Love will move People to conform to it outwardly: For though they never would be at the Pains to know its Truth, yet they don't know but it may be true. And to give up all Claim and

and Pretence that Way is too much: Nay, there are that will go a great deal farther; that shall be constant at Hours of Devotion, Observers of Festivals, Attenders upon the Administration of the Word and Sacraments, to whom this Change of the Standard would prove a most disagreeable Thing. In truth, this is that Sort of Christianity few care for. For as the Lives of few are so pure as is here required, they love not what upbraids, and flies in their Faces. And there are much fewer who are not so entirely taken up with Advantages, Honours, Figure, Power, [as not to find it utterly inconsistent with their Views and Turn of Mind. Conform to an external Christianity they can, but to submit and give themselves up to its real Spirit and Power, is the Difficulty; nay they love their own Establishments and the Religion of their Country; and as they have Interests and Prospects of Advancement in them, 'tis no Wonder. But the true Man is he who wants to see the Standard chang'd, and Truth uppermost in the Hearts and Wishes of all Men. Who longs to see them act like reasonable Creatures, whose Religion must of consequence consist in right Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, and a proper Application to it as related to their own; and their Government not in Prerogatives and Powers, which never could be intended, nor have Affinity to the End propos'd; but in its Relation

lation and Necessity to public Good, and in such Glory as lives and dies with it: Who longs to see Men vie, not in Things external, which is shameful, but in Accuracy of Knowledge and Justness of Conduct, and whatever Stations or Offices they are in, so well vers'd in their Duty, as to do to others what those Stations or Offices require; happy in the Consciousness thereof, and of their so answering the Design of their Creation, and in their Assurance of every Thing necessary to their own Good upon that Condition: Who longs to see not only Idolatry, and all manner of Superstition, and every Tendency to Arbitrary Power destroy'd, but whatever annoys the Societies of Men, and their Universality so inform'd and temper'd as to know all the Relations they stand in, and to delight in observing them, and particularly in adding to whatever tends to increase the Happiness, by augmenting the Virtue and Perfection of the whole: Who longs to see Persons of Distinction forsaking all other Pursuits as mean, and inspir'd with every noble Sentiment of this Kind; sedulous to do that Part, which accompanying such Distinction, must render it not more amiable in itself, than beneficent to the World; and all Nations and Families upon Earth pleas'd now with the Happiness intended, and pointed out to every Station, but much more with the Thoughts of what is to come, provided

H they

they perform their Parts duly: Who longs to see Religion made so easy, reduc'd to such Purity, and so fully taught, as to give the compleat Knowledge, Satisfaction and Joy it is intended to give, and to remove all the Obstructions to them it is intended to remove; that so every Man, as he is surrounded with as many Privileges and Advantages as he could wish, may thoroughly understand, and rejoice in them: Who longs to see such as have Power and Influence intent and fix'd hereupon, that so all the Assurances, Advantages and Means of bringing Men to it that can be had, may be had, and they themselves, as Instruments of the greatest Good to Men, may have the Praise, and every other Reward of it: Who longs to see the World in its true State, or when all Men, however otherwise prosperous or great, shall think that nothing, unless accompany'd with an Understanding to know, and Virtue to act in Conformity to that prime Intention.

This is the State Men have forsook or err'd from; and to bring them back, or to raise them up to which, is the great Busines of Christianity, which holding out the strongest Sanctions, obliges them to the Observation of such Rules as would secure to each his natural Rights and Privileges, in the full Enjoyment of which his present Happiness consists. So that all a Man can wish is, to live with such as know and observe those Rules,

Rules, or in other Words, where the true Religion is rightly apprehended, the Government administred agreeably, and all social and relative Duties are kept. In which Case he is sure of being as happy as the Creator intended he should be, and setting aside all irregular Desires, he can wish to be. This is the whole Doctrine and Aim of Christianity, save only that considering the Weakness of our Nature, it hath provided for that too, and is over and above a certain Means in the Hands of the Creator of bringing Men to the Knowledge and Observance of that Doctrine, in spite of all the Opposition it shall meet with, either from the Lusts and Blindnes of wicked and intriguing Men, or from the desperate Malice and most intricate Designs of the cursed Angels themselves. After Mankind had lost the Truth, a Method there must be to recall it. And the Divine Being must reveal himself in such manner as to secure the momentous Article of the Unity, and yet to answer the other End of his Interposition, and that is to give a compleat Rule, and to render it effectual. Instead of attending to which, Men soon quarrel'd about true Notions of that Part of it (I mean what is called the Trinity) which God hath not explained, nor hath given us Power to know more of it, than that the Distinction of Father, Son and Holy Ghost was made by him, and is appropriated to the

Method he made choice of for that Purpose. Had they attended to the Law of Nature, the Scene of Life had been regular. But they did not, and thence became miserable. And here is a Call upon them to return, inforc'd by all possible Motives, at once succouring the present State, and preparing for a better. The Method is, to banish Idolatry, despotic Power, or Government, and irregular Ambition ; to substitute their Contraries ; and then teach that every Man should endeavour to improve himself by laudable Means only, and to be content, except when he is unfairly treated, with his Condition, as who is assured of being as happy as he can wish to be, provided he performs his Duty, or in case of Failure, repents. Which Method is sufficient, we say, to put an End to all Disturbance upon Earth, either externally in the World, or internally in every Man's Breast, as is manifest. And then again, suppose the Religion, Government and Society of the World once such as is here required : the first will support the second ; the second the third ; and the third will produce the rest. And thus all is secur'd by teaching what it is not hard to understand, *viz.* true Religion, right Government, the due Performance of the relative Duties as understood in this System, and a proper Regard to Acquiescence and Satisfaction in the necessary Distinctions in Life, whilst we wait for and earnestly

earnestly expect that Time when Distinctions will be made upon a true Bottom, and this State of Confusion and Darkness shall be changed into a regular one, according to the sole right Notion of the Providence of God, who superintends and will conduct all Events, from the Beginning, in such manner as to bring Things hereunto. And the Rule we contend is perfect, not because it puts Men into such a State, but (which is more agreeable to our Case) into one in which, if we act accordingly, we shall be always aiming at, pressing forward, and approaching nearer to it, till all be compleated.

For though some actually deny'd there is any such Thing as a Providence, and the greatest Men among the Heathens own'd themselves puzzl'd about it, yet its Reality is demonstrable. For the Things that happen are owing to second Causes, and the second to a first, otherwise there are Effects without a Cause. God created the Species free, leaving them to the Use of their own Faculties, and interposing in such manner only, as not to force or interrupt the Use of them. So that whatever comes to pass may be said to be his doing, considered as the first Cause, or the *sine qua non*. But Men are the Causes of it, considered as right or wrong, good or evil; or as the Work of those who are left to their own Determination. What is more, Things generally succeed according

as they contrive and project with more or less Art and Cunning: Not always indeed, for then God might be said to appoint what he only permits, and to leave the World to second Causes entirely; nay, he must be necessary to that Prosperity and Glory of it, which is owing to Craft and secret Corruption; but so far only as he, regarding the End he proposes, sees fit. Which Distinctions have been set in the clearest Light by others; and what I would add is, that there is one constant Scheme of Providence from first to last, so over-ruling Things as to leave Men free, and yet interposing so as to bring them at length to this grand Point. And this Consideration join'd to the other, gives us, I think, a compleat, demonstrable Idea of it. And what mightily distinguishes the Christian Doctrine is, that it is not only the best System of Morality, but perfectly adapted to the Nature of this great Scheme, and necessary and essential to its Completion.

This is the Doctrine taught, and these are the Obstructions to it: Obstructions not a little to be lamented. For certainly it must be an unspeakable Loss to Men, themselves as well as to others, when through any Prejudices or other Views they are deprived of so glorious a Prospect, and others of such immense Good. Could *Newton*, after he had pierc'd into the Cause by which this and other material Systems are held together, and found

found their centripetal and centrifugal or projective Forces might be adjusted by the Laws of Mechanism, and the Phænomena in Nature agreeable; could he view the whole Scheme, I say, with no less Delight than Wonder! And is it no Pleasure to observe how the Communities of Men are link'd by Laws, and instigated by Principles and Affections, which duly observed, and operating aright, must produce a Scene, in which so many Millions of Creatures, endued with proper Powers, should of course be so happy! Is it no Pleasure to find that however weak Men are, however remote their Schemes of Religion, Government and Society have been, and still are, from what is perfect, yet they are superintended by a Power ever ready to take the Advantage, to give that Cast to the Affairs of the World, and to conduct them so that the rational Power prevailing over that Weakness, they shall end at last in the most perfect Religion, Government and Society! Is it no Pleasure to find, that in this Method all the Principles and Affections of human Nature, which in this State of Blindness and Error appear to be directed generally to such mean Ends, will here at last be directed to their right End, and every Power have its proper Work, and every Capacity its proper Pleasure! Is it no Pleasure to find, that such as the Weakness of human Nature is, such is the Care and Providence of the

Author over it, insomuch that that Mischief which might otherwise be done by licentious wicked Men, is cut short by a Life proportioned to that Weakness, and that the Rules given for the Conduct of human Life coincide with that Providence: For the whole is kept within Bounds, at least so as to preserve Order in the present State; by which Means an Opportunity of using their Talents is given Men; at the same time Things are so contriv'd and laid, and such Faculties are lodg'd in them, as hereafter shall rise up with Power, and work forward to that right State. Is it no Pleasure to find that in the Christian Scheme, particularly the wandering Thoughts of Men are ty'd down to a certain Method, whereby they are (as far as possible) compell'd into the Road of Truth and Virtue, and centring there at last; whatever Evils have happen'd, or whatever Good has been lost, they shall see both those Mischiefs cur'd, and that too in the most effectual manner?

And now this being the End and Design of true Religion, how faulty, how shameful and base is every Thing that puts a Stop to it! And yet this is in some Degree the Case of every Man, who instead of having this in View as the main Object of his Desires, has them turned into another Road, and all his Desires and Wishes are to distinguish himself in a Way that has no Affinity to it; nay, is the Reverse. And though this is highly disagree-

disagreeable and odious, especially to Minds bent upon the great End here propos'd, and of Consequence might create Dislike and Quarrel ; yet see the wonderful Excellency of this Rule in this very Instance. For here the Minds of Men are inspir'd with such Benevolence, that notwithstanding all this must be extremely offensive to them, they shall bear it patiently, and still love the Authors. This is that Benevolence, which, tho' it rejoiceth in the Truth and its Success, yet beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things; contrary to the narrow Reasonings of Philosophers, and equally to the best Notions we can frame of the Divine Goodness itself, which could not permit such Weakness as is in Life, but with a View to that great Purpose, and requires us to overlook it in Imitation of its own Example.

And here it is I desire, if any Thing said in the Course of the Argument, either past or to come, in order to represent it in the best Light, shall seem push'd too far, or to dip too deep into the Infirmities of human Nature, to which I must own myself as subject as others ; this, and whatever may seem to have any Tincture of ill Nature in it, I desire it may be here sunk and annihilated, as every Thing of that Sort will be at that Day, when Christianity shall attain its Period,

riod, and there shall be no more Mischief for ever.

But not to digress too far: Such Faculties, I say, are lodg'd in Men as upon the right Use of them must of themselves beget this Change of the Standard. For it is agreeable to Reason and Sense such a Change be made. And if Men are allowed the Use of them, the Consequence will be this—They won't rate Things in the manner they were wont to do. For Instance: They won't admire a Man, because being at the Head of an Army, he had such Spirit and Resolution, nothing was too hard for him, or could stand before him: Or that being turn'd for Intrigue, he could see the Way through the Weakness into the Favour of Men, and thence rising into Power, enslav'd or pillag'd them: Or that being endow'd with great Powers of Mind, he employed them in celebrating the Praise of a worthless Prince or People, and thereby caused great Honours should be conferred upon him while living, and Monuments erected to his Memory when dead. Nothing of this Kind will they admire. But having this Rule before them, they will admire them just so far as they shall appear to have acted accordingly. They will see wherein the Heathen Philosophy and Morality fail'd, their cardinal Virtues being built upon no Foundation that could support them, for want of making the Divine Being

Being and the State future the Ground. They will therefore consider these two Things as the Foundation of all; and enquiring what is the Virtue, the grand Cardo or Hinge upon which a right System of Rules must turn, they will find this is, that each study the Good of the whole; and in order to distinguish himself, be able to deny himself any present Qualification for its Sake, and to postpone every private Advantage to it.

2. That however the relative Duties might be imperfectly understood by Heathens, or defective in one Point, while right in another; yet in this Method all are fix'd upon their true Foundation, and directed to their right End.

3. That the natural Scheme being lost, nothing can possibly so much contribute to answer the Intention of the Creation—the Happiness of all, as endeavouring to restore that natural Scheme, or to bring Men back to the Law of Nature, to the original Order of Things; which is the Case of Christianity, and the End of all that great Dispensation.

4. That this therefore must be made the prime Thing in every Man's View, and that his Merit or the Wisdom and Excellence of his Conduct must be measured by it. And therefore tho' he won't admire a Man, because being at the Head of an Army, he had such Spirit and Resolution, nothing could be too hard for him, or stand before him; neither the Principles upon which

which he acted, nor the End he propos'd, appearing at all right ; yet should a Person of right Principles, and proposing the true End, behave with equal Conduct, Spirit and Resolution ; or one turn'd for Intrigue aim at the same End with as much Sagacity and Dexterity as others aim at other Ends ; or one endowed with great Powers of Mind employ them diligently and faithfully herein, such Persons, Princes, Heroes, Politicians, Defenders of the Truth, they must needs admire. That is, they won't admire and applaud Men upon such Grounds as the World in its Weakness has been wont to do, but in Proportion only as they are seen to act up to the true Christian Character, or appear to act upon just Principles directed to their right End by a regular Understanding.

This is the true Notion, the true Idea of Virtue, as it is the Result of the greatest Wisdom to know, and Resolution to do what is right ; which Idea the Heathens could not have, not knowing whence to bring their Supports, or to fetch that Wisdom. For which Reason, Virtue, as understood by them, and taught and supported here, must be widely different. For it is impossible the Idea of that which is the Perfection of human Nature should be clearly convey'd, where the Divine Being himself, the Basis of every Thing that is praise-worthy, was by a most absurd

absurd Blunder left out of the Plan ; directly contrary to which is what is here offer'd ; where all is regular and compleat : Where the Character of the Divine Being is most amiable, and may be contemplated with endless Adoration. Virtue is the Way to Glory, and wants nothing to encourage or strengthen it. Man is represented in his true Condition, made for a most excellent Purpose, and has Faculties suitable to the Attainment of it, and needs nothing more to attain it than Prudence and Conduct in the right Use of the Means set before him. His Principles, his Love of Being, Excellence, Honour, Distinction, Pleasure, and his Capacity for the Enjoyment of them are just ; nor can any of these be wanting to him, provided he does not want that Prudence and Conduct, or neglecting his Duty, follows after such Things as have no relation to them. In a word, here all is Light, Life, and Wonder. And were the Princes of the World, instead of arbitrary Sway, and measuring their Greatness by the Extent of Countries under them, all raised into this Character, and the same true of all other Degrees and Orders of Men, 'tis plain what the Result must be. All which the Reader must keep in View ; not that this ever will be the Case of Mankind in their present State, but because without it it is not possible to see the Point intended to be proved at laſt,

last, or to be let into a View of that Truth which the Philosophers so much sought in vain, and to give which is the Design of this long Thread of Argumentation. And whereas various People have strove to gain their Ends, I mean a fix'd Peace and Happiness, sometimes throwing off the Yoke of Tyranny, by exerting themselves in an uncommon Way with great Life and Resolution, and sometimes changing their Form of Government from Monarchy to Oligarchy or a Republic: And in the Church the same hath been done not only by rejecting the Supremacy which the *Romans* by pretending to confer a Power on some over others, brought both to acknowledge; but finding Men us'd their Power ill, nor answered the Ends of the Posts and Places they were rais'd into, turning Episcopacy into Presbytery, Independency, and one knows not what, it is plain such Changes never can work a stand-in Cure; however they might put some Stop to present Grievances and Evils. For never was any State more unsettled, tumultuous, vexatious and bloody, than the ancient *Roman* Republic, which is so oft quoted in this Case. And in Religion, change the Name from Bishop to Presbyter, or what you please, you cannot change the Nature of Men, which will have covetous and ambitious Views under one Name as well as another; and when Seasons arrive, and Opportunity

portunity offers, will show them. So that no Form either in civil or religious Affairs can be secure from Mischief, except that one Form which is prescribed in this Rule, and that is, that all, Prince and Subject, Magistrate and private Person, be instructed and tempered, as has been suggested. In which Case it is not possible any thing should be wanting to compleat the Happiness so far as was intended, of every rational Creature in the World. And this being evident, from what has been said, it is plain our Rule in this View of it is perfect. Let us now take it in another, and suppose this Objection made to it, *viz.* That allowing it is so, yet it never can take place. For if we can remove this Objection, then all will be clear, consistent and unanswerable.

It is manifest there is in Nature a certain Order to be observed, and which being observed, all is right ; and yet this Order is not kept up in this present State ; nay, through this grand Defect the virtuous Part of Men seldom gain what they aim at by laudable Means ; many suffer undeservedly, and some are wretched, that is, as far as the most iniquitous and base Treatment can make them so. What follows is, that there is a Time appointed when that Order shall take place, and they shall share in it, or make a Part of it ; that though the World at present is by no Means a regular or wise State of Things, neither

neither is there that right Understanding, nor consequently that Satisfaction in it one cannot but wish, nay, to Men of real Insight it is an odious Scene of Weakness and Incongruity; in order therefore to compensate this to them in the first Place, and in the second to gratify every Man's natural Principles and Desires, such a regular wise State, I say, there must be.

Man is a Creature of Reason and Instinct. To follow Instincts is easy and unavoidable. To cultivate his Intellect, and adhere to its Direction, *Hic labor, hoc opus.* 'Tis here you see the Reason they so soon deserted and lost that Order. And in the violent and most passionate Scramble for the Things of the World, 'tis obvious how little Relations and Duties would be understood, or understood, regarded; or if they would be regarded by some, yet how much they would be neglected and spurn'd by others.

In this Chaos, this Confusion, the Business of a Rule must be either to rectify all Irregularities, all the Follies and Extravagancies of human Nature, or to counter-work them. Now the first we find is impossible, and therefore the second must be the Case. And if whatever Men acquire out of the Road prescrib'd here, it shall appear they have gained nothing, and that it is impossible in the Nature of Things they should acquire ought farther than a present Amusement;

ment; that no public or private Prosperity can otherwise have in it any Principle of Duration, such an Intention there must be; because otherwise, besides the Misery and Wretchedness we see, there could not possibly be any good or wise End in the Creation and Permission of such a System. Either the Weaknesses and Extravagancies of Men must be removed, and the opposite Virtues take their Room, or the World is worse than nothing; nay, it would be Cruelty to allot any reasonable Creature a Part in it. For without that Order, or at least some Share of it, 'tis plain, it could not subsist at all; nor can human Laws remedy the Evils, because human Laws cannot prevent the Successes obtained by Breaches that are clandestine, and known only to the Author himself and his Accomplices. So that as he is a reasonable Creature, and will cleave to what is agreeable to that Order, and must desire others would do so too, as there is a Necessity for it; yet, as this is not done by others, at least not enough, so he may be said to exist indeed, but for no End, except to be a Witness to what he hates and abhors; and that is, to see such as bid Defiance to the Rules essential to the Support of that Order, first steal by Fraud and Cunning into the Advantages, thence shoot forward with Ease into the Glories of the World, and then set all off with a *providentia divinā*, as though

infinite Truth and Goodness itself had had the main Hand in such foul Transactions. A Supposition so horrid and blasphemous, that it is even of itself sufficient to prove the Truth of the Christian Doctrine, as it is this alone which teaches us not to think of, not to value, in the least Degree, the Glory to be gain'd in such a State, but to be abstracted from and despise it, and every Thing that belongs to it, excepting nothing but our Duty, and what is of a Piece with it.

And that there is a perfect Correspondence betwixt this Rule and the Divine Providence is plain, because whatever Men acquire out of the Road prescrib'd here, they are sure to find nothing but Disappointment in it, as will appear, if we consider them either as they subsist in Bodies politic, or of themselves.

As to the first: Cast your Eye upon what *Aristotle*, *Isocrates*, and others, have said upon Government, and you will find it very insufficient. One Thing in particular you may take notice of, *viz.* That they take human Nature as it now is, and so endeavour to adapt their Rules to it. And here it is you must expect fine Precepts, in order to render the Prince amiable, and his People virtuous, with many Things which the Wit and Art of a skilful Writer will suggest. And yet after all these Flourishes, this deep-fetch'd Philosophy, human Nature is the

same. And if Security may be had, it must be laid in the Principles of Men, and in their steady Adherence to those Principles. And therefore except we could find a System of Politics that could produce this great Effect, our Government, however excellent, must be subject to Change. And as this is a Thing we cannot but despair of, it must follow that no human State can be built upon a Foundation that is immovable. This proceeds upon Supposition, that all Things in that State, its Laws, its Discipline, are right; whereas in truth there never was any such Thing. And granting this Fact, and that it is well prepared and fortify'd within, yet it is still subject to the Want of Fore-sight, and of consequence to be betray'd and ruin'd by others.

Of those whose high Lot it hath been to hold the Reins, how few have been prepar'd with proper natural Abilities, or if they had such, cultivated them aright? How few have had the Sagacity and Discernment to shun the Snares that would certainly be laid for them, or Constancy and Resolution to act up to them, suppose they had? Or if they had all these Things themselves, could they convey them down to their Successors?

How seldom is it there are no clashing Interests, nor opposite Claims? Then Ambition and selfish Views can dissolve all Ties, make a weak Pretence appear strong, and

set the Bars of Conscience quite out of Sight. And as the upper Part find their own private Interest favour'd, their Party likely to succeed into Power, or their Hopes and Expectations are flatter'd in some other Way, they are won over to this or that Side. And the Populace are drawn either Way, according to the Management they are under. And thus while Men are liable to be blinded by their Lusts, and at Liberty to listen to what is right, or otherwise, the best Claim may be set aside. Nor can the wisest Prince be secure of finding Friendship in the Hearts, or Stability in the Friendship of his People; nor can any State be said to be thoroughly well fix'd, where this is or may be the Case.

How unsettled, how different have Men ever been in their Notions of Government? Some contending for Non-Resistance, meaning there could be no Remedy in case of Oppression; and others for an Equality, a Republic, thereby reducing all Things to Uncertainty; and few making it to consist as it ought to do, in a right Adjustment of Prerogatives and Privileges on both Sides, in Subserviency to the common Good?

In most Countries, to secure the Government, and prevent Innovation, they are watchful against what might be an Inlet, or give Rise to it. By which Means they exclude not only that, but whatever might be of

of Advantage to them. And if the Religion established, and what the People are accustom'd and attach'd to be false, they are under a Necessity of guarding and defending it, that is, they are under a Necessity of doing the most cursed Thing in the World. And tho' this may keep all quiet for some time, yet it is the Reverse not of Religion only, but of Government too. For tho' the People are pleas'd, yet they are enslav'd in the worst Sense of the Word, and lose all those natural Rights and Advantages which should render their present Being invaluable, and raise and fit them for another ; which to an ingenuous Mind, however well posted in such Communities, must be a most cutting Consideration, and poison all its Pleasures. And to an exalted brave one a most pressing Motive, a restless Incitement, at any Hazard or Loss, to endeavour after a Change, and to free the People from such Bondage and Corruption.

Where there is the least Shadow of Liberty, or where there is the Substance itself, as in this Nation, yet still the Government has its Defence to keep, not against foreign Powers only, but against the Intrigues and Snares, the Disgust and Malice of the Ambitious, Aspiring, and Discontented at Home ; especially in Times of Peace and Prosperity. For as Ambition begets, so these cherish Emulation in Power and Place ; Envy at those

in them, and Artifice to supplant them. Whence a thousand Lies, deep Hypocrisy and Dissimulation, Dangers, Concussions. And besides, 'tis hard for Men in Power, and who have Opportunity, to refrain. And some are to be made Friends, and retained, whose Desires are not to be satisfy'd. Hence Measures are taken, and Miscarriages committed, which give an Handle to their Rivals, ill Opinions are conceived by the People ever disposed that Way, and the worst Things are not only suggested, but strengthened and confirmed, till at last the Government nods and totters. Add, that States beget their own Ruin in some measure naturally. For as Temperance, Frugality, Labour, Exercise, produce Health, Strength, Courage, Patience; so those produce Success, and that Ease and Luxury; and thence Oppression, Dislike, Uneasiness, Insurrection, Rebellion, Revolution. In a word, Men are ignorant, passionate and sinful Creatures, of very short and uncertain Lives, and in consequence the Affairs of the World must be unstable, as they depend, and cannot but depend upon the Judgments, Wills, Integrity and Lives of such Creatures, and a thousand Contingencies beside. Were the Kingdoms of the Earth erected upon a true Foundation, the Nature of Society every where rightly apprehended, and Men such Creatures as to do always what is right, in this

this Case all Things must be firm and secure. But this is not the Condition at present; but the Center, the End at which all the Dispensations of Providence aim, and to which all Nations shall be brought at the last; and till that Time none can be said to have any, not even the least Assurance of a lasting Prosperity.

As to private Happiness, I have shown public Good ought to be first in all our Intentions, and that without this no Action can be truly laudable. And yet how little of this is there in the World, the very Consciousness of which is of itself sufficient to dash the Glory, and make us sicken at the Sight of great worldly Prosperity. For hence it follows, that should you examine into it, you would find no few Flaws in its Rise perhaps; and considering the Effects it is apt to have upon the Minds of weak Men, 'tis no Wonder we generally see so much Failure in its Use.

2. You are pleas'd with your Prosperity, and would have others so too; nay, without this your Prosperity is of small Moment in the main. For search your Heart, and you will find 'tis the Esteem and Love of others you desire and long for. For suppose yourself in some Island, furnished with all Materials, but very much alone, and necessitated to continue so. In this Case, those Materials would be of small Value, there

being nothing there answerable to the Principles of a sociable Nature or Being. From this Instance it is plain the Esteem and Love of others is essential to your Happiness. And now that this cannot be obtained by any Thing outward is manifest ; because, 1. In the present State 'tis their own Prosperity and not yours Men wish for and would rejoice in : And because, 2. That Esteem and Love which Men in their Prosperity seem to have, measured by such as being reduced they would have, is worse than none.

3. The Heathen Philosophers could see how even from the Cradle the Mind is prejudiced and corrupted, how those Prejudices and Corruptions grow up with it, are riveted, and scarce curable. And this being the Case of the greatest Part of, if not all Mankind, hence outward Prosperity is to them the Mark and Standard of Happiness. But now, if according to these Men, the present State and Course of Things is not a right one, then whatever Success a Man has, whatever Noise he makes, or whatever Figure he casts, 'tis all a Cheat, not only upon others, but upon himself too. For all is absolutely destroyed by this one Consideration, that had there been a true Understanding in the World, nothing of that Sort had ever prevailed in it. And that these Men were not mistaken is plain, because if you enquire what are the Rules to which Men are obliged

obliged to adhere, in order to answer the Intention mentioned, you will find they are the Reverse of what Men judge by, when such Things are held in Admiration by them. Besides, if the Course of the present World is not agreeable to Nature, nor are the Fashions in it founded thereon, but were introduced by Weakness, are supported by the Ignorance of the Multitude, and Instances only how far Mankind have sever'd from or fallen short of the true State, he whose Happiness is built upon that Foundation must as certainly be bubbled, as the lost Truth shall be restored, or Mankind who have Faculties suitable, shall be raised into that State.

4. Besides, supposing there is no such Scheme of Providence, yet if ever good Sense grow and prevail in the World, if ever the Species improve in that Knowledge which is easy and natural to it, and the Obstructions mentioned are taken away, this must be the Consequence, and Men will see and detest that Prosperity, Fame, Honour, Distinction, Dignity, Greatness, Glory, which is no way consonant to the true Order of Things, which some had indeed, but unluckily for the World and themselves too, were so far from answering any wise End thereby, nothing could be more opposite or pernicious. It is certain, the Epithets weak, ignorant, selfish, proud, vicious, knavish, base, covetous, unsocial, arbitrary, tyrant-

tyrannical, would be Words without Meaning, were there no Characters in Life that agree with them. And if a Man's Character is ting'd with any one of them, however prosperous, he is wretched and miserable, tho' he does not know it. And yet worldly Prosperity is so far from boasting an Exemption from them, that it is in its very Nature to beget them, and what is worse, a Looseness to, and Contempt of, that Religion which Providence hath appointed as the sole Means of setting Men above them. From which Considerations we may safely conclude what the greatest secular Advantages are, and that when a Man has got them, 'tis a thousand to one they degrade and fink him into that Character, which of all others, in his right Senses, he would hate and abhor.

In the mean time, Providence stands ever arm'd with Sword, with Famine, with Pestilence, to reduce what is wrong, and to keep the Nations of the Earth within the Bounds of Sobriety, leaving us nothing that we can depend on, but the Wisdom of our Conduct in conforming our Actions and Behaviour to the Nature of its Designs, and relying for what is to come, upon the Steadiness of its Hand and irresistible Power. And tho' particular Men are apt to flatter themselves with long Views, and to put the Period of their present Being far off, yet in truth it is instant, at their Heels, and upon

upon their Necks. For Disease and Death are ever ready to cut you short of your Aims: And could you see the World as it really is, you would see it in the Form of so many Bubbles upon the Surface of the Sea, or so many Sparks in a burnt Chart, where Things appear and shine, and yet the Wonder is, how soon they go out and are no more.

As therefore there is no Stability in the World, the Difficulty is how to conduct Things so, that all Men may have their reasonable Appetites and Desires answered. In the present State, as they have deserted the true original Principles and right Course, and are generally enslav'd by the Objects of their Lusts; nay, were, for this Reason, I believe, sentenc'd to Disease and Death, 'tis plain this cannot be done. It is necessary therefore they be taught what those Principles and that Course are, and be brought to such State, as to observe them without Danger of Infringement. For it is manifest, if you can bring them to this, every End is gained.

I have already proved,

1. That the Divine Interposition was necessary.
2. That this is the End of that Interposition.
3. That the Christian Precepts are agreeable to that End.
4. That

4. That the whole Scheme was appointed for that Purpose.
5. What that End, that Purpose is.
6. That the Method is such as must effect that End.
7. That this is the sole effectual Method of obtaining that End.

And these Things being regularly deduced from several Texts of Scripture, this is sufficient to evince the Point in Hand beyond all Possibility of Evasion or Contradiction. However, it will be of Use here to examine farther into the Nature of the Holy Writings, in order to shew that this Rule, thus perfect in itself, is compleatly set forth by them. Now if the Holy Writings do all directly aim at this End, then whatever Difference of Opinion may happen as to their Original or Inspiration, they must of Necessity be true; it being evident that this is a Thing which a Being infinitely wise and good must propose to himself in the Creation, Permission and Government of such a World as this is, or of such Creatures as Men are. To know the real Merit of any Book or Writing, the Way is to examine into the main Scope and Design, and then to see, supposing that good, whether the Means made use of are such as will attain it or no. By which Rule, if you judge of these Writings, you will find nothing was

was ever written with more Clearness or Plainness, or with greater Simplicity and Freedom from Artifice or Affectation ; nothing can possibly be more manifestly and undeniably true from the Goodness of its Design.

For, 1. Since Mankind are naturally prone to Idolatry, is it possible a better Method should be contrived to restrain them from it, than binding them to the Worship of the true God by the strongest Sanctions ? Not all at once : For this could not be done without Encroachment upon the free Use of their own Faculties ; but by selecting a People on purpose, who should be visited with extraordinary Judgments, whenever they fail'd herein ; whose Reward, should they cleave to it, should be inexpressibly great, and their Misery as remarkable as Wretchedness in its utmost Extremity could make it, should they not. Read the Writings of *Mosè* over, and you will see that their Sublimity does not so much consist in an Expression quoted by a certain Critick, as in the Weight and Stress laid upon this one Article, and in its being so press'd and urg'd, nothing can be more so. To be a Warning and an Instance to them of the Divine Vengeance upon this Crime, were they not commanded to destroy, and not spare the Idolatrous, but to extirpate them utterly ? Were they not made Instruments of what should be in the like and worse

worse manner executed upon themselves, should they be guilty of that Crime? Could any Thing deter them from it more than the greatest Assurance that it should be followed with Destruction and Havock, of so much the worse kind, as they should not be to them as to others an End of Sorrows, but succeeded with Plagues and Curses, without Pity, without End? And of all the Plagues and Curses that can light upon Men, what greater than to be so press'd by Siege, as to eat the Flesh of their own Children, to fly before the Face of their Enemies, to find no Rest to the Soles of their Feet, to have a trembling Heart, failing Eyes, and Sorrow of Mind always, to be an Astonishment, a Proverb, a Bye-word among the Nations whither they should be scattered, and to have Blessings put into their Hands for no other End than to be wrested from them, and enjoyed by those that did it in their Sight?

2. The particular Regard paid to this People above all others in the World, the eminent Virtue of their Ancestors, the mighty Esteem and Veneration in which they are held by them, and the signal Honour done to them, in selecting them from among others, and preserving them from the great Scandal of Idolatry, coincide with that natural Love Men have for themselves and their own Nation. And therefore they must necessarily

necessarily be a strong Engagement upon them to love that Religion and Law, by which Things tending thereunto were so strongly injoin'd and inforc'd. Neither is it possible to invent any Thing that could have greater Force or Influence upon them. For there is nothing Men are so fond and tenacious of as peculiar Marks of Distinction. And so you find the *Jews* to this Day so tenacious of their Law and Religion, nothing can extort it from them; nor can the Force of Truth itself, nor the greatest Honour that could be done to them, break through that Tenacity.

3. Not to mention other Topics, nothing, provided they kept close to their Duty, should be wanting to them, or able to withstand them. They could neither want Counsel to direct, nor Strength to execute, nor Assistance and full Power to succeed their Undertakings. And to prevent their being struck and drawn aside by the Magnificence of the Worship and Temples of Idolaters, here all Things are specify'd, and the whole Service so circumstantial and splendid, no human Art or Invention could vie with it. Their Temple was one of the most remarkable Things in the whole World, having over and above this indelible Note of Distinction set upon it, that it was dedicated to the Worship, and honoured by the Approbation and Presence of God himself, when no other

other was so. In Correspondence with the same Design were Prophets rais'd up, and whatever they threatned or foretold was always, except in case of Repentance, fulfill'd. Whatever they said or writ, either historical or moral, or relating to the Appearance of the Messias, points the same Way. The relative Duties are taught in a manner agreeable to the then present Circumstances of the World, in as great and much greater Perfection than in any other Nation; and they were inculcated with their true and proper Authority, when in other Places they were not so. The Account given of the Fall is agreeable to what Experience teaches, and allowing only for the manner of the Conveyance (a Thing in its own Nature arbitrary) rational. The Institution of the Sabbath, the Degeneracy of Mankind, and their Destruction by the Flood, and in a word, the whole Plan of the Oeconomy appears to have no Absurdity, no Contradiction in it. But all Things there taken separately, or together, are manifestly subservient to that End. And therefore as we can bring no reasonable Objection against the Writings in which such Things are contained, nor against the Things themselves, provided they have a good and wise Use, so that Use appearing, is a clear Proof that those Writings must of necessity be admitted by us.

Thus

Thus every Man may be satisfy'd in the Authority of the five Books of *Moses*, and in that of the Book of *Joshua* manifestly aiming at the same End, and inculcating the same Things. After this, the Histories of the Conduct of this People under the Inspection and Tutelage of the Angel of God, as contained in the Book of *Judges*, the first and second of *Samuel*, the first and second of *Kings*, the first and second of *Chronicles*, and the Restoration of the Captivity, as contained in the Books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, together with their Supplements, or Books of *Ruth* and *Esther*, have nothing in them that can be objected to, and appearing to have a most excellent Use and Design, must of Necessity be admitted by us.

Of Prophecy this is the true and essential Character. *Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see I have this day set thee over the nations, and over kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant,* Jer. i. 9, 10. The Ark in the Tabernacle was called the Ark of the Testimony, and Christ bore the same Testimony. The flying Roll which the Prophet *Zachary* saw had this Property, that into whatever House or Nation it was brought it should destroy it, *Zach.* v. 2. And Christ gave this Command to his Disciples, *In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye*

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depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the Dust under your feet, for a testimony against them, Mark vi. 10, 11. When Moses had taught and instituted his Religion, the Character he gives of it is, See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. Deut. xxx. 15. If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations, and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread, shall be yours. — There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you, and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you, are the Words of Moses, Deut. xi. 22. And one of you shall chase a thousand, says Joshua, xxiii. 10. And in like manner every Thing must give way to the Gospel: For whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things that he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them,

them, and ye shall have them, Mark xi. 23. meaning that miraculous and unlimited Power which attended the first preaching of the Gospel, as it had done the Institution of the *Jewish* Religion before, and which shall compleat it at last; insomuch that whatever you pray for or desire coincident therewith, you shall have, and can no more doubt of it, than if it were present. The Pardon or Punishment, the Salvation or Destruction of Men must be determined by it, by this Gospel, by this Word taught and inspir'd by the Divine Spirit. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, be ye inspir'd with this Word, in virtue of, and according to which, Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained, Joh xx. 22.* And, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven, Matt. xviii. 18.* And, *Whosoever shall fall on this stone (so the Kingdom of God is stil'd in the Language of the Prophets, Isa. viii. 14, 15. Zech. xii. 3.) shall be broken : but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder, Matt. xxi. 44.* In short, this is the Word which proceedeth from God, and of which it is said, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God,*

Deut. viii. 3. The Doctrine delivered by Christ and his Apostles is not another Doctrine, but of the same Origin and Nature, and has the same Authority and End. The *Jewish* Rites and Ceremonies are abolished, having answer'd what they were design'd for; but the Law and the Prophets prophesy'd till *John*, and then began the Christian Dispensation, in which are Precepts immediately adapted to the Thing in Hand. The first foretold the Destruction of many Places, the Dispersion and Gathering of the *Jews*, and particularly the Dissolution of the *Affyrian*, *Persian*, *Grecian*, and *Roman* Empires, and that the ten Kingdoms rising out of the last, after having been intoxicated, committed Whoredom, or fallen into Superstition, should recover; and then, as both agree, all should conclude in a Kingdom which should break in pieces, and destroy all other Kingdoms, and stand itself for ever.

There is nothing so strong as Truth. For the World is conducted by infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness, as is demonstrable. And by a Kingdom that shall break in pieces and destroy all other Kingdoms, considering the whole is under that Conduct, it must follow, this is the Thing design'd. The whole Purpose must be to gain this one End, to put such as shall be found worthy into Possession of that Truth and its Effects.

I have before observed how much Mankind have swerv'd from the Law of Nature.

1. In deserting the Creator, and setting up the Worship of Idols.
2. In proposing to themselves wrong Objects for their Pursuit in Life.
3. In making a wrong and weak Estimate of the Things in it.
4. In striving to outstrip one another in Things wherein there ought not to be the least Emulation.
5. In giving themselves up a Prey to Avarice and worldly Ambition.
6. In complying with the Fashions and Customs introduced by them.
7. In neglecting to seek after the true Law of Nature.
8. In transferring the Grounds of Honour, Respect, Deference, Veneration, from the Things to which they belong to the most improper Objects.
9. In making those Things the Rights and Privileges of Birth and Inheritance, which in reality are due to every Man's good Conduct only, by which Means Virtue is discouraged and sunk, and the right Order of Things inverted.

I observed likewise, that there is planted in Man a strong Impulse to Glory, in order to make him an Instrument of Good, and studious and ambitious of adding to the Happiness of the whole rational System. The first Effect of which Impulse was instead of meriting from others, to strive to erect himself by any Means above them.

And not content with that, to set himself up as the proper Object not only of their Honour, but Worship too. Thus introducing into the World Idolatry, the foulest Vice, to gratify a most irregular and odious Passion ; which Impulse works in all Men ; but the true End being lost, Disorder and Misery ensued, occasioned by Men degraded and debas'd into such vile Characters as to become the Causes of them.

In such a State, where there is little or no Regularity, nay, where there must be the very utmost Confusion, save what is prevented by human Laws, which cannot reach to one thousandth Part of the Causes of the greatest Evils, as Numbers must be deprived of the Happiness they were made to enjoy, and even those who enjoy'd the most must fall short of what is intended them : And as Man is a social Creature, whose Happiness depends not upon his own Disposition only, but likewise upon that of others : And as the Happiness of all in Conjunction must depend upon the Fitness of the Temper of each Member ; so without the Interposition mention'd, no good End can be made of such a State, nor in itself is it tolerable. But now, according to the Tenor of this Doctrine, the Design is to correct whatever is the Occasion of Mischief, to remove whatever is an Obstruction to that Happiness

Happiness which would be felt and enjoyed every where, did the Law of Nature or the original Order of Things prevail. Besides, there is no Principle of Duration in either public or private Prosperity, save only as they coincide with what is here propos'd. Accordingly, the greatest Empires are vanish'd, and the rest, being more or less of the same Composition, must follow. It is agreeable to infinite Wisdom and Goodness to conduct Things to a wise End. And hence it is ordain'd, that every Thing appertaining to this Life should perish, that so the Pride of one Man, the Covetousness of another, the Hypocrify of a third, and their Acquirements, Possessions, together with all their Irregularities, should be reduc'd to nothing. In the mean time the Doctrine is propos'd to the Study of Men, and the Method taught, to which such as conform, or may be allow'd to have done so, will make a Society, which being in every Thing agreeable to that Law of Nature, will have its Principle of Duration in it, being every where regular, and having nothing but what must be approved by that Wisdom and Goodness, and consequently nothing but what must stand.

If the Truth may be spoken, the greatest Part of the Dignity, Glory, and other Advantages that have been obtained in the World, had no true Foundation at the first;

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and they have likewise been worn and enjoy'd by such as have acted the Reverse of their true Intention, any thing being an Object of their Approbation, rather than Attention to the Divine Will, or promoting its Designs. For which Reason they shall all be annihilated, and that too in an Instant. For though to you who measure by Days, Months, Years, and reckon from one Period to another; from the Time, for Instance, when Men were wholly idolatrous, and appear'd to have no Signs of any Thing like a regular Understanding amongst them; or from the Time you first see them marching Armies, engag'd in bloody Wars for they knew not what, performing heroic Deeds, as they call'd them, like Creatures of mere Instinct, or little more; or from the Time, when after a Rule had been given them, they hasten'd to pervert it, immers'd themselves in crafty Politics, out-reaching one another in their Contention for Power, by any Means they could think of; or from the Dawn of the lost Truth, to the Time of a more general Conviction, and at last a victorious Light, a full Blaze of Day: Tho' to you, I say, who measure and reckon in this manner, the whole seems long, as the Scenes are various, yet when the Sand is run out, your Measure chang'd, and you shall look upon these Periods as so many Points in Eternity, they will seem as nothing.

In

In the present State Men rise up into Being, and are soon cut off again, as I observed before. This is proportion'd to the Degree of our Understanding and Virtue. At the same Time there is a Law, which kept inviolably, nothing can be wanting to compleat the Happiness of the System, and the Powers of human Minds are such, as will naturally possess themselves by degrees of that Law. And therefore, though the Generations of Men thus pass away, as is necessary for the Support of this System, as it now is, yet the End will be gained. And so we see one Genius rises up after another, by means of which the World is let into a fuller View of that Law. And remove the Prejudices and Obstructions nam'd, and that Law is easily apprehended, and indeed natural. To bring the World to which Pass, is the great Work, which besides his ordinary Employment, every Man should endeavour to set forward. And when human Nature shall have exhausted this Work, so that there shall appear nothing more of which it is capable, Things will be then brought to their Period, and there will be a Necessity for a Removal, in order to give more Scope, and that the Mind circumscrib'd by the narrow Bounds of Science, may be supply'd with new Work, as well as rewarded for what is past.

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The Virtues, particularly immovable Adherence to Right and Truth, by which the Order of this World is principally supported, depend for their Reward and End upon another State, which, we say, is an undeniable Ground of expecting it. The Virtues of Christianity, such as a Preparedness to die for the Restoration of the Truth, and the others mentioned, may be consider'd as so many Links or Draws, which, (like the Chain hung down from *Jupiter*) by the Assistance of the Spirit and Providence of God shall wind the Species up into it. And as no other Impressions will hereafter be made upon the Mind, nor will it have any other Way of thinking, desiring or exerting itself, than what is agreeable to that Law, it is easy to see all must be regular. And as all will then vie in contributing to the Improvement of all, and be bent upon Things of that Sort only, so whatever relates to that Society, its Morals, Arts, Inventions, Converse, Enjoyment, Worship, Efforts, Employments, Distinctions, must be just in themselves, and of a most excellent Nature.

That God in his Providence is thus counter-working and bringing to nought all the evil Arts and Contrivances of Men, their Irregularities, Desertions of the Truth, Wickednesses, Politics, Acquirements, Honours, Establish-

Establishments, and the Effects of them, their Pleasures, Confidence, Pride, Inconsideration, Extravagance, and whatever is not of a Piece with that Truth, is affirmed by *Job*, *Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me that thou mayst be righteous? hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud and abase him. Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low: and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee, that thine own right hand can save thee*, xl. 8. And by *Daniel*; *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever*.ii.44. And by the rest of the Prophets, except (I think) one, and by our Saviour; *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away*, Matt. xxiv. 35. speaking in the same Spirit, and generally using the same Phrase. Which Prophecies will not only be fulfill'd, but the Precepts, especially those in the Sermon upon the Mount, will be put in practice when that

that State arrives. And then the Propriety of the Rules, and the Reason of their being given in part at one Time, and more fully afterwards ; of their Application first to this Event and then to that, will appear. Then will you see why our Lord taught Things more spiritual, more perfect than this State will admit of ; and how at the same Time they challeng'd our Zeal in this State, they will chime in, and pair with that. Then the prophetic Nature of this Rule of Life, and the Causes of the Difficulties that must attend it as such, will be all clearly unfolded, and you shall be let into the whole Scheme, and see how the Divine Being hath all along adapted his Revelations to the Condition and Exigencies of Mankind, and so as to bring about the great and glorious End intended, that is, a State whose fundamental Principle shall be to seek his Glory by contributing to and rejoicing in the Happiness of the whole, and being ever true to those Rules, upon the Observance of which the Harmony, and in consequence the Happiness of that State must depend.

And O happy Time may the greatest Part of the Species say, when we shall no more see Greatness and Weakness joined together, nor be expected to revere against our Judgments the Objects (setting aside the Hopes of their Amendment) of our just Detestation ;

testation: When we shall no more see the Base honourable, nor the Worthless dignify'd: When we shall be no more harangu'd by such as deceive us, nor rul'd by such as rend and tear us, nor insulted by such as should assist and benefit us: When we shall be no more vex'd with absurd Attachments, Warpings, Blindnesses; nor alarm'd with Fame that is a Lye, nor dazzl'd with Glory that is a false Notion: When we shall no more hear of Heroes courageous in their Actions, but selfish in their Designs, the Themes of Fame, but the secret Ruin of their Countries; nor of Princes who made Power a Property, and us'd it in the Gratification of their Lusts: When we shall be no more disturb'd by the unruly Passions of Men, nor with depending upon their Care, Integrity, Wisdom and Goodnes; nor depriv'd of our just Rights, not only by their Breaches, but pretended Administration of Justice, or the Partiality and Iniquity of their Laws; nor pay for Property, till we have nothing left: When we shall be no more griev'd to see Abilities accompany'd with the most offensive Qualities, and Men odious in one Part of their Character, while amiable in another, nay, intolerable, even when they boasted to serve us, and had the Power: In a word, when we shall no more see a Life subject to such Misery, for want of

of better Principles, nor to the Admiration and Desire of such Happiness for want of Insight: And when we shall be convinc'd how wisely this was permitted upon many Accounts, but particularly, that being let into a View of the World and its Glories, we might fly to what is real and substantial with Haste and Abhorrence, and so be forc'd up into that happy State.

And now having seen the Reasonableness, and the Fineness of the moral Part of this Rule of Life, take one Instance of its great Elevation, and hear it addressing itself to you, consider'd not only as you now are, but as you shall be, divine, or as to a Creature upon its Progress to Perfection, and that shall certainly attain it: *Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.* *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.* But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil, Matt. v. 34. And take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your bea-
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venly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lillies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not array'd like one of these. Wherefore if God so cloath the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, Matt. vi. 25. Upon which Texts many Authors of Distinction have took upon them to write and preach, first limiting the Sense of them, and then explaining them in such manner, as to adapt them as far as they could to the present Condition of the World. Whereas they seem to admit of no such Limitation, nor in Strictness to be altogether capable of such Explanation, but to relate

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to that future State, which being the End of the whole Scheme, it was proper the Rules should be propos'd to such as being Candidates, would make it their Study to prepare themselves for it; and who being taught to abstract themselves from the World entirely, should measure their Rule not by its Fitness to a State which is consider'd here as passing away, only, but look upon it as a Part of that Word which proceedeth out of the Mouth of God, and of which the Prophet says, *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of Man as the flower of the grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever,* Isa. xl. 6. And which the Apostle explains thus, *All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is that word which by the gospel is preached unto you,* 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. And which being delivered by the Prophets, our Saviour Christ and his Apostles, shall at last terminate not in the perfect Knowledge of the Law of Nature, as discovered to the World by the *Plato's, Aristotle's, Cicero's, Seneca's,* or any other Men, however eminent, but in the perfect Knowledge and Practice of that Law, as they shall have been rais'd and

and fashion'd to it by a Life of Exercise and Discipline, and above all, by the Power and Spirit of God himself. And then shall you see the Glory of God, not as thro' a Glass darkly, not as when *Moses* talking with the Angel, was allow'd to see his Back Parts only, but must not see his Face because of its Brightness, but as tho' the Angel had bee~~n~~ seen by him Face to Face ; that is, Things will be then grown up to Maturity, and fitted for your Understanding, and your Understanding will be fitted for them. Then Principles, Duties, Ends, will challenge one another. They will meet your Thoughts and seize and arrest your Heart. In short, the whole Design will be finish'd, and agreeable to the highest Notions of the most refin'd Morality, and the most amiable Character of the Author, who, if there be one Thing more beautiful or beneficial than another, ever chuses and does it ; whose Conduct is a Copy of just Behaviour that may be imitated, but never equall'd, and which will be the Object not only of your Praise and Study, but of your Delight and Wonder, your Joy and Extacy, for ever.

That infinite Wisdom and Goodness must propose such an End, is manifest ; because otherwise it is not possible to say this wretched State was ordain'd, and is permitted for any wise Purpose at all ; because the Princi-

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bles and Desires planted in Men could not be said to have been planted there for any End, neither one sort of Men nor another having been able to obtain what they could not but desire and long for, and what many sought in vain, tho' in the right way; and because many must have suffer'd, and been wretched through the great Perverseness of the weak State they were in, for which there was no Redress, and without this never can be any. That infinite Wisdom and Goodness must propose such an End is evident even to Demonstration: That this is the Thing propos'd by the Mosaic and Christian Dispensations is manifest from what hath been said: It is plain likewise, that as human Wisdom could not contrive the Method, neither could human Power execute it: It follows then, with the fullest Evidence and Demonstration, 1. That Christianity is the sole, true and infallible Rule of Life. And, 2. That that Rule is sufficiently and compleatly set forth in the Holy Scriptures; and in consequence, that no Man can want Knowledge of his Duty, or proper Support in all Cases and Difficulties whatever, provided only that this Rule be fairly represented to him, and understood as it should be by him.

What remains is the Argument from Miracles, which is exhausted; and the Prophecies

phecies have been open'd, explain'd and defended so well, considering the Nature of the Subject, nothing seems wanting to give Satisfaction to the Inquisitive on that Head, or to raise his Expectation of the great Changes approaching ; and hence it is that these Papers are here arriv'd at length at their full End.

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